



A study on occupational stress among hotel employees

Dr. Sachin S Vernekar¹, Dorsa Heidari²

¹ Dean FMS BVU and Director, Bharati Vidyapeeth, Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship Development (IMED), Deemed to be University, Pune, Maharashtra, India

² Research Scholar, Bharati Vidyapeeth, Institute of Management and Entrepreneurship Development (IMED), Deemed to be University, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Abstract

In today's competitive environment, stress is an inseparable part of each industry. Stress is a reaction to an outward situation or new changes which deviates individuals from their prevalent path. The appropriate amount of stress is an essence to motivate and inspire individuals, however, the high percentage of stress can lead to physical and psychological problems. Hospitality industry as one of the fast-growing industries with high amount of recruitment is exposed to occupational stress due to turnover, workload, physical and mental high demand, etc. According to above, this article aims to throw light on the occupational stress among hotel employees and coping strategies to prevent organizational and individual costs. Therefore, the effect of occupational stress on organizations as well as individuals through the environmental and internal sources of stress are scrutinized. Coping-stress mechanisms are studied from two different angles (i.e. Psychological and managerial), which is divided into two important categories in part of managerial. This study is based on a library work and the data are extracted from secondary sources. It was also found that the overtime policies and practices and restriction in resources allocated are the important stressors among employees.

Keywords: occupational stress, hospitality industry, employee

1. Introduction

Occupational Stress is defined as "A condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characteristics by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning" (Beehr, A., & John E., 1978) ^[1]. Occupational stress can contribute to work-related ill health, with negative effects on both physical and psychological well-being (Lo & Lamm, 2005) ^[10]. The encountering of individuals with tension and variety of demands, effects the person's mental and spiritual health. This can be particularly true for executives in the hospitality industry, which has been hit hard by the economic downturn. Hospitality leaders play an essential role in managing their subordinates occupational stress, in the sense that, despite all of their concerns about the resources, number of sales and customer feedback, they should not transfer them all to employees. At the same time they also have to find creative ways to take care of their guests, and patrons who are stressed out and are hoping to be able to relax when they stay in hotels, eat in restaurants and travel on cruises. As an executive, they have to know how to manage their own stress plus lead their employees who may be having a hard time focusing on their work. As a leader they may feel responsible for their employees and their organization to the detriment of their own health. At the same time they need to be able to look confident and calm so you don't pass their stress onto everyone else. A variety of factors contribute to workplace stress such as negative workload, isolation, extensive hours worked, toxic work environments, lack of autonomy, difficult relationships among coworkers

and management, management bullying, harassment and lack of opportunities or motivation to advancement in one's skill level. (Bickford, 2005) ^[2] Stress-related disorders include psychological disorders and other types of emotional strain, maladaptive behaviors, and cognitive impairment. In turn, these conditions may lead to poor work performance, higher absenteeism, less work productivity or even injury. (Danna & Griffin, 1999) ^[6].

The main purpose of this study is to find out the strategies that could be adopted to manage stress which would be useful for many hotels to improve policies and implement effective changes in order to make a productive work force.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global Hotel Industry

The hotel industry has a huge allotment in hospitality industry. The industry, accounting for over one-fifth of the value of total world-wide services trade, is regarded as one of the world's largest and fastest-growing industries with highly labor-intensity, is a major source of employment generation. However, due to current world's fluctuating financial situation, hotel industry attempts to decrease cost with the help of cost-reduction strategies, but at the same time, applies customer orientation programs to enhance the quality of service (soeg, 2017) ^[15]. Moreover, taking the advantages of outsourcing the human resources in term of lower, did not long lasted due to decline in the number of unionized workers and shifted many of the compensation claims to outside organization (Olaniyi, 2013) ^[11].

There are five major Sectors in the Hospitality industry, with most of which the hotel industry has an overlap, although, at a same time it looks like a conglomerate of all them. The sectors are as follow: (Pynes, 2008) ^[12].

1. Lodging- Accommodation
2. Food & Beverage
3. Travel and Tourism
4. Entertainment – Casino, Cruise, Gaming
5. Timeshare

Therefore, due to the service-centric characteristic of hotel industry and market competition (i.e. the consumer coming to the supplier and simultaneously pressure to deliver quality service), working in hotel industry, can be concerned with a high level of stress in the workplace, which are associated with shift work, long working-hours and consequently high turnover and low payment (Haynes & Fryer, 1999) ^[9].

2.2 Previous Research on Occupational Stress

Due to factors like technology, globalization, industrialization etc., organizations have been faced with intense changes in the process of work, during the last years, which have led them to a phenomena in name of “occupational stress”. Occupational stress by work output reduction and by influences on employees’ private life can respectively cause both organizational and individual costs (Hannif, 2006) ^[8].

Table 1: Effects of Occupational Stress

Organization	Individual
Increase in Absenteeism	Employee’s private life
Employee Attrition	Employee’s family members
Employee Turn Over	Marital Problems
Annihilation of organization’s reputation	Psychological Problem (Confidence, self-esteem, etc.)
Poor work commitment	Social problems (Community and friendship)

According to (Cooper, L., Philip J., & Michael P., 2001) ^[4] sources of stress can be categorized into two broad areas: Environmental (external) stressors that includes job-specific sources (organizational sources) and Individual (Internal) stressors. (Table 1)

Table 2: Work-Life Balance

Environmental (External) Sources of Stress (Cartwright, Susan, & Cary L., 1997) ^[3]	Individual (Internal) Sources of Stress
Job-Related factors	Everyday Challenges
Roles in the Organization	Personality
Work Interactions (with colleagues, managers, etc.)	Life Changes
Career development issues	Financial Issues
Organizational factors (e.g. organizational structure and climate)	Friend and Family Issues

In addition, due to the complex nature of occupational stress, it demands a holistic approach in which, the employment factors and work community groups play an important role to declare the concept of occupational stress. (Cox, Tom, Griffiths, & E., 2010) ^[5]

2.3 General Stress-Coping Mechanisms

Many psychologists also contributed in the study of coping mechanisms by grouping mechanisms or strategies according to their manifestations and purposes. In general, here are the general classifications of coping mechanisms: (Sincero, 2012) ^[13]

Table 3: General classification of coping mechanisms (sincero, 2010)

Type of Mechanism	Explanation	Examples
Defense	Unconsciousness	Reaction formation, Regression
Adaptive	Tolerance	Altruism, Symbolization
Avoidance	Keeping away from the stress	Denial, Dissociation, Fantasy
Attack	Diversion of one's consciousness to a person or group of individuals	Displacement, Emotionality, Projection
Behavioral	Modification the way of acting	Sublimation, Undoing.
Cognitive	Alteration the way of thinking	Intellectualization, Rationalization,
Self-harm	Intension of harm self as a response to stress	Introjections, self-harming
Conversion	changing the thought, behavior or emotion into another	Somatization

2.4 Stress-Coping Strategies

As stress encroaches employee’s health and performance, therefore, it needs to be coped with or managed to effectively minimize its undesirable consequences. Two strategies can be used to cope with stress:

2.4.1 Individual Stress-Coping Strategies

Occupational stress is largely attributed to individual behaviors such as personality traits and therefore, coping strategies are primarily initiated and managed by the individual (Schaufeli, B., & Maria CW, 2000) ^[14]. Individual strategies are based on “self-help” or “do you” approaches, some specific techniques that individuals can use to effectively manage their job stress are:

1. The appraisal-focused (adaptive cognitive) strategies are those coping mechanisms which involve the change of mindset or a revision of thoughts.
2. The problem-focused (adaptive behavioral) strategies are those that modify the behavior of the person.
3. The emotion-focused strategies include the alteration of one's emotions to tolerate or eliminate the stress.

2.4.2 Organizational Stress-Coping Strategies (Schaufeli, B., & Maria CW, 2000) ^[14]

Coping strategies in an organization will aim to decrease the existing stressors and prevent occurrence of potential stressors. Organizational coping strategies are more of proactive nature, that is, they attempt at removing existing or potential stressors and prevent the onset of stress of individual job holders. Following are organizational coping techniques and efforts. Accordingly, an organization can adopt the

following process:

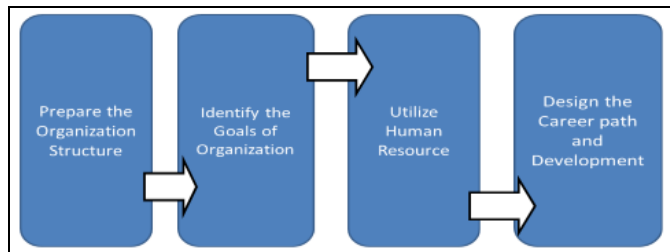


Fig 1

2.4.2.1 Organization structure

To commence an organization, the very initiative factor is to have a clear structure, which should be made up of (i) Rules Identification, (ii) Rule Distribution and (iii) Rule allocation, that all together make an organization structure.

2.4.2.2 Organizational Goals

Many of the anxiety and stress problems of employees in organizations, are due to the lack of identified organizational goal, which can be clarified by clear structure and process. Therefore, receiving ample support from organization, can play an important role in coping stress in organizations.

2.4.2.3 Human Resource Practices

There are a wide range of practices in human resource, which in case of organizational coping-strategies would be limited into three areas that are : (i) Job enrichment, (ii) stress-related classes and (iii) EAP (employee Assistance Program) (Susan, 1997) [3].

2.4.2.4 Career path and Development

Career path and development programs, help individuals to make their own goals in an organization to progress in their job and achieve the organizational goal as well. There are a wide range of practices in career path and development can be adopted: (i) self-assessment, (ii) career counseling through interview by experts and managers, (iii) educational activities and preparation of workshop and classes which help employees in their goal clarity and (iv) Job enlargement.

3. Methodology

Current research has been conducted by library studies. In this study, all the available resources have been studied, including: Books, articles, manuals and reporting on quality awards. Then, we classified our findings and analyze them by using reasoning and reasonable inference.

4. Findings

According to the results and studies, it is found out that;

- On the overtime practices and policies, is mentioned as one of the major occupational stressors among employees, which was tried to get reduced by offering relaxing services from employer's side, but, very few of the staff were aware of these services and to date, there had been only few referrals.
- The tensions between subcontractors and non-subcontracted employees, generally known as Inter-

personal relationships, were another source of stress for both, employees as well as managers.

- In addition, limitations in resource allocation (namely, financial shortage, labor shortage, time constraints) and dealing with difficult customers have special impact to augment occupational stress.
- It has been found that 42.8% of the employees feel timely and more job oriented training programs must be provided to them which would increase their confidence to work effectively.

5. Recommendation

- **Supervision and Transparency:** The careful selection and adequate supervision of critical moments in the career in one hand and social contact between staff and organization which should restrict the amount of confusion and prevent unreasonable expectations from the other hand can decrease occupational stress among employees.
- **Career development appraisal:** Organization should be willing and prepared to provide career development appraisal, including the use of self-assessment tool, to offer individual counseling by internal staff or external services, to provide retraining opportunities, and to offer access to job placement services, such as 'outplacement' (Sutherland and Cooper, 2001) [4]
- **Time Management:** Time management is an essential tool to condense or reduce occupational stress. Moreover, lack of promotion, job feedback and proper practices of training and development also considered as high job stressors.

6. Conclusion

In an age of highly dynamic and competitive world, man is exposed to all kinds of stress that can affect him on all realms of life. The need to cope up with stress has gained importance in order to maintain a good working environment in the organization. This particular research was intended to study the level of stress among the employees in hospitality industry. Furthermore, it is revealed that occupational stress has lowered job satisfaction, organizational commitment and increased quitting intention. Therefore, it is essential to implement the personal and organizational strategies to manage stress. The Management can also cut back excessive hours, which directly affect the employee's physical fitness. The Management has to concentrate in providing valuable Counseling to the needy and also certain recreational programs which can pull out the employees out of stress have to be implemented to make them productive.

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