Physical and Psychological Conditions of Work: Implication of Industrial Peace and Harmony

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Abstract

The paper examined the physical and psychological conditions of work with focus on industrial peace and harmony of an organisation. The paper identified sources of stress to include individual, organisation and environmental factors such as changes in business cycle create economic uncertainty, work overload, a demanding and insensitive boss, and organizational policies, family issues, personal economic problems and interpersonal relationship. Among the various variables in the sources of stress, death of spouse, divorce and marital separation were found to be potent more than any of the other factors although differs with reference to personality types as individual with type B are less reactive to some of the causes of stress and management of stress is of two folds than individual with type A i.e. concern for individual and concern for the organisation in order to achieve industrial peace and harmony. It was concluded that the physical and psychological conditions of work in any organisation will determine the quantum of industrial peace and harmony and thus recommended that need to understand the emotional conditions of employees and show empathy in order to foster sense of identity and belongingness.

Keywords: Physical and psychological work environment, Industrial peace and harmony, Stress, Personality types A & B, Collective bargaining.

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Introduction

By physical and psychological condition of work, it was being referred to as the way the work environment, as well as the organic structure of the organization is designed to make stress to be a normal unavoidable phenomenon. In essence the discussion centres on the stressors in the work place i.e. environmental factors that produces stress with a view to understanding it in its entity by examining the various sources, psychological process, tolerance, cost, consequences, personality and lastly how to manage the phenomenon.

The stress in workplace is brought about by high growth rate of global industrial outfits; workers are now exposed to such deadly problems like toxic chemicals, environmental pollutions, accident, negative emotions, joy, feelings, happiness and health. Stressors may be at individual level, group level, organization level and extra organization level. By individual level, this stress is directly associated with a person's job duties, e.g. job securities. Group level stressors are caused by group dynamics, e.g. inconsistent behaviour. Organizational level stressors are usually caused by organizational culture, beliefs and philosophy unique to the organization while the Extra-organisational stressor are those caused by factors outside the organization e.g. balance career and family life are stressful.

Defining Stress

Many scholars have contributed to the phenomenon and attempts were equally made to define the concept. Below are some of these definitions;

1.   Ghosh (1991) in Obisi (2003) defines stress as all - pervading modern phenomenon that takes a heavy toll of human life.

2.   To Robert and Angelo (2001) stress is an adaptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and or psychological processes that are consequences of any external section, situation or event that places special physical and/or psychological demands upon a person.

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3. According to Mullins (2002) stress is a source of tension and frustration which tends to arise where an individual feel that a certain situation should not exist.

4. Sekaran (1989) in Ogundele (2005) defined stress as anything that changes our physical, emotional or mental state while encountering various stimuli in our environment.

5. In views of Stephens (2003) stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and/or which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important.

A careful examination of these definitions reveals that all these scholars were saying the same things using choice of words to present their views. Although some seems not revealing at a glance while some do. However, the definition of Stephen was considered appropriate for the study.

Choice of decision was based on the fact that stress is not necessarily bad in itself. Although stress is typically discussed in a negative context, it also has a positive value. It's an opportunity when it offers potentials gain, for example, many professionals see the pressures of heavy workloads and deadlines as positive challenges that enhance the quality of their work and the satisfaction they get from their job and often endear these professional to the heart of their bosses. It is not only with opportunity but associated with constraints and demands. The former prevents you from doing what you desire while the letter refers to the loss of something desired. For example, an employee undergoing the annual performance review at work may experience stress, because you are confronted with opportunities, constraints and demand. A good performance review may lead to a promotion, greater responsibilities, as well as higher salary but a poor review may prevent getting the promotion and where the review is to extremely poor degrees, it might result in loss of job.

Sources of Stress

By source of stress, it was a set of factors that may serve as potential avenue to experience tension and anxiety. These were environmental, organizational and individual factors. If not properly handled, it may become actual stress and this is sometimes contingent on individual differences.

Environmental Factors

The environment uncertainty influences the design of an organization's structure which invariably influences stress levels among employees in that organization. For example, changes in business cycle create economic uncertainty – anxiety over likely loss of job. Political uncertainties as a result of political inability or government policies may bring out stress. Another example is technological uncertainty – new innovation may make employee's skill and experiences obsolete and lastly is terrorism, this can also induce stress from the environment as this in the recent time as generated a lot of concern, most especially those working in sky crappers, public events etc.

Organisation Factors

The stress from the organization stems from many internal characteristics that are peculiar to the organization. Pressures to avoid errors, complete tasks in a limited time, work overload, a demanding and insensitive boss, unpleasant co-workers, personnel and organizational policies – task, role and interpersonal demands, organizational structure, organizational leadership, and the organisation's life stage are a few examples.

Individual Factors

This is another potential source of stress as it encompasses employee's personal life. Employee's personal life is embedded with family issues, personal economic problems, inherent personality characteristics and interpersonal relationship. All these interact to determine the degree of stress of any employee at any given time. For example, marital difficulties, breaking off a relationship, financial commitment etc. all these do have bearing on the degree of stress experienced at work.

It is worth nothing that stressors are *additive phenomenon* i.e. stress builds up. Each new and persistent stressor adds to an individual stress level. In essence, single stressor may be relatively unimportant in and of itself, but if it is added to an already high level of stress such addition may be the straw that might break the camel's back.

Physiological Processes of Stress

This is another dimension to the understanding of stress in the work place because the discovery of physiological processes relating to stress, marked the first knowledge of the existence of close link between emotional life and human health. Hans Selye (1953) research on General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) in Ugoji,and Isele (2009) revealed for the first time how human beings adapt themselves to emotional stresses and strains in their lives. In view of this, emotional stress can be grouped into three (3) stages;

(1)   Alarm Reaction Stage

(2)   Resistance Stage

(3)   Exhaustion Stage

The alarm reaction stage is the emergency reaction that takes place in response to any stress. It may be in the form of physical effort such as injury, loss of sleep, hunger, etc. or psychological effect such as loss of love, status, security etc. It is then clear, whenever the alarm reaction become deep rooted, it develops symptoms like fatigue, headache etc. When the physiological changes continue for long time, they are followed by a stage of resistance in which the organism develops resistance of the particular stressors which brings about unwanted physiological changes. When sufficient resistance is generated, the symptoms caused by the physiological changes disappear. The exhaustion stage is a critical stage because it signifies the reappearance of a disappeared stress i.e. collapsed and defence organism can no longer perform satisfactorily and in most cases do lead to serious illness or death.

Research Finding on Stress Problems

The major breakthrough in stress research was made by Dr. T.H Holmes and his colleagues at the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle through the discovery of social readjustment rating scale. This scale is globally used to understand the possible role of stress caused by various life events, as individuals adjust to them. Below is the list of stress adjusting scale.

Causes of Stress and Their Impact

EVENTS	SCALE OF IMPACT
Death of spouse	100
Divorce	73
Marital separation	65
Jail term	63
Death of close family number	53
Personal injury or illness	53
Marriage	50
Fired at work	47
Marital reconciliation	45
Retirement	45
Change in health of family member	44
Pregnancy	40
Sex difficulties	39
Gain of new family member	39
Business readjustment	39
Change in financial state	38
Death of close friend	37
Change to different line of work	36
Change in number of arguments with spouse	35

Mortgage over $10,000	31
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
Change in responsibilities at work	29
Son or daughter leaving home	29
Child leaving home	29
Trouble with in-laws	29
Outstanding personal achievement	28
Spouse starts or stops work	26
Beginning or end of school	26
Change in living conditions	25
Revision of personal habits	24
Trouble with boss	23
Change in working hours or conditions	20
Change in residence	20
Change in schools	20
Change in recreation	19
Change in church activities	19
Change in social activities	18
Minor mortgage or loan	17
Change in sleeping habits	16
Change in number of family reunions	15
Change in eating habits	15
Vacation	13
Major Holiday	12
Minor violation of law	11

Source: Rahe Richard, Veach Tracy, Tolles Robbyn &. Murakami Ken (2000). The stress and coping inventory: an educational and research instrument. Stress Medicine 16: 199-208.

Consequences of Stress

From the above research findings, stress shows itself in a number of ways. For instance, an individual who is expecting a high level of stress may develop high blood pressure, ulcers, irritability, loss of appetite, accident-proneness etc. All these can be summed up under three general categories namely; physiological, psychological and behavioural symptoms.

Physiological Symptoms

The early concern with stress was directed at physiological symptoms. This was predominantly due to the fact that the topic was researched by specialist in the health and medical sciences. This research led to the conclusion that stress could create changes in metabolism, increase health and breathing rates, increase blood pressure, being on headache and induce heart effects. The link between stress and particular physiological symptoms is not clear. There are few if any, consistent relationship but has provided a greater relevance to understand the direction of stress.

Psychological Symptoms

Stress can cause dissatisfactions. Job-related stress can cause job-related dissatisfaction, in fact, is the simplest and most obvious psychological effect of stress. Tension, anxiety, irritability, boredom and procrastination are few examples. Evidence indicates that when people are placed on jobs that make multiple and complicity demands or in which there is lack of clarity about the incumbent's duties, authority, and responsibilities, both stress and dissatisfaction are increased and vice versa.

Behavioural Symptoms

This manifest in changes in productivity, absence and turnover as well as changes in eating habits, increased smoking or consumption of alcohol, rapid speech, fidgeting and sleep disorders. This particularly explains the recent increase for unscheduled work absences.

Model of Occupational Stress

This model is the combination of potential sources of stress vis-à-vis consequences using individual differences as basis for the outcomes which was illustrated in tabular form to provide at a glance the summary of cause and effect of stress (Badar, 2011) denoted as Fig 1.

Potential sources	Individual Differences	Consequences
Environmental factors	Perception	Physiological symptoms
* economic uncertainty	Job Expectation	Headache
* Political uncertainty	Social Support	High blood pressure
* Technological uncertainty	Belief in locus of control	Heart disease
Organizational factors	Self-Efficacy	Psychological Symptoms
* Task demands	Hostility	Anxiety
* Role demands	Depression	
* Interpersonal demands	Experienced Stress	Disease in job satisfaction
* Organisational structure		
* Organisational leadership		
* Organisation's life stage		
Individual factors		behavioural symptoms
* Family problems		Productivity
* Economic problems		Absenteeism
* Personality		Turnover

Source: Stephen (2003). Organisational Behavioural, 10th ed. Prentice-hall of India Private Ltd, New Delhi, 579. Fig.1

Difference in Individual Stress Tolerance

Researchers in stress have discovered that people vary in their reactions and tolerance of stress. Some people are known to be facing stress situations throughout their life but may have their physical and psychological health unaffected. The differences in individual

stress tolerance are as a result of the individual differences variables, which moderate the relationship between the potential stress and the actual stress. These variables include perception, job experience, social support, belief in locus of control, self-efficacy, hostility and anger. (already depicted in the above model)

Stress and Personality

It is often asked whether there is any personality pattern of an individual that can increase or reduce stress. Obisi (2003) found that there were actually different personality patterns that had impact on stress. These patterns are classified with type A and B personality pattern. Below are some of the type A and B personality characteristics with reference to stress of an individual:

Type A and B personality characteristics with reference to Stress

Type A People	Type B People
1. Do things rapidly (tendency to walk, Eat, move rapidly)	May be ambitious but may work steadily
2. Impatient with speed with which things are accomplished or work is done	May not always be impatient with which things are accomplished or work is done
3. Try to do more than one thing at a time about one thing and talk about capability	Plan and execute things which they think they feel are within their different capability
4. Are tense during leisure time or rest feel guilty of whiling away their time	May truly enjoy leisure hours and may even forget their involvement work or goals
5. Unable to appreciate things, beauty or nature that may relax mind	Appreciate things of art and beauty
6. May undertake more things than can take	May undertake and manageably cope with tasks

Source: Chris Obisi (2003): Organisational Behaviour, concepts and applications, Malthouse Ltd, Lagos Fig. 2

Cost of Stress

Ogundele (2005) was of the opinion that it is not easy to estimate the commercial damage caused by stress related diseases. For example, majority of cases of absence from duty may not be recorded because they are a day or half of it. Several forms of sickness such as indigestion aches and pains, back problems, ulcers, heart disease etc. result in lost hours of work, many of which are the products of stress. In addition, there are no estimates of the cost of mistakes made by people who remain at work while under stress (Rose, 2005). There is also the problem of processing the cost of lost managerial days, more difficulty in assessing costs of wrong decisions, wasted time, monitoring of performance. Even industrial unrest may well have its roots in stress (Charaif, 2010). Without mincing words, the works of Obisi (2003) and Stephen (2003) showed that the cost associated with stress is always on the high side and hence the need for effective management of it.

Management of Stress

Stephen (2003) suggested some approaches that can be of help in the management of stress but cautioned that from the organizational point of view, stress perception is always at variance with that of employees. For example, management, may not be concerned when employee's experiencing low to moderate levels of stress, this on the part of management may be seen as functional stress which may lead to higher employees' performance but get more concerned when there is high level of stress or when low levels of stress seem to be sustained over a long period of time which may invariably reduce employees' performance (Charaif, 2010). From the individual point of view, stress may be of help to induce performance but employees would not like to see it, even the low levels of stress would be perceived as undesirable (Jamal, 2011). On the basis of the proposition, the discussion of management of stress shall be in relation to individual and organizational approaches i.e. the two propositions.

Individual approaches to Management of Stress

This revolves around the individual employees on what they can do to reduce stress level either at work or elsewhere. The following are some individual strategies that have proven to be effective over the years in the management of stress;

1. Time management techniques
2. Increase physical exercise techniques
3. Relaxation techniques
4. Expanding your social support network

Organisational approaches to Management of Stress

Management of a willing organization on stress management for the purpose of overall success of the organization may consider the following strategies either to change or modify;

1. Organisational culture and philosophy
2. Improve organisational climate
3. Improve personnel policies
4. Use realistic goal setting
5. Redesign job
6. Increase employees' involvement
7. Improve organisational communication
8. Establishment of wellness programmes

In addition to the two approaches, Robert and Angelo (2001) gave another strategy which can also be of good help to the management of stress. The strategy is coping. Coping is a management of stressors and stress. Coping is directly affected by the cognitive appraisal of stressors, which in turn is influenced by situational and personal factors. People cope with stress by using *control strategy* (directly confront or solve problem) escape strategy (avoids or ignores stressors and problems) and symptoms management strategy (focuses on reducing the symptoms of stress).

Industrial Peace and Harmony

Industrial peace and harmony are two relative terms that were embedded in industrial relations as a practice in any organisation of choice and by implication the focus of industrial relations in any organisation is peace and harmony. In the views of Oginni and Faseyiku (2012) to achieve industrial peace and harmony in any organisation, the dimension in terms of performance of the components of industrial relations are to be understood with reference to implementation of collective agreement reached from time to time such as employees (members of organisation who were into contract of employment i.e. exchanging skills for wages and salaries), employers (owners or representative of owners who were in the art of paying wages and salaries for services rendered unto them), collective bargaining (negotiations towards collective agreement), government specialized agencies (instrument of the State to make relevant and appropriate legislations), dispute resolution mechanism (procedure laid down to resolve conflicts), and trade union (employee and employer's association whose aim is to promote the interest of its members).

Since the focus of study was on how physical and psychological conditions of work constituted stress, emphasis was placed on the dimension of the components of industrial relations. Therefore, industrial peace and harmony is a situation whereby employer and employees abstain from all forms of industrial actions such as strike, lockout, wildcat etc. at the same time operating within the framework provided by the specialized government agencies. The implication was that industrial peace and harmony in any organisation remains a cooperative phenomenon by all the stakeholders including the association of employers and somewhat maximizing productivity and minimizing job losses (Oginni & Faseyiku 2012).

Objectives of Industrial Peace and Harmony

The following were the objectives of industrial peace and harmony as put forward by Ogunyomi and Kolawole, (2003) to include

a) Working and progress of Industry should be in a democratic manner.

b) Safeguarding the interests of the management and the workers.

c) Eliminate unfair labour practices.

d) Provide an environment of cooperation and coordination.

e) Improve the economic status of the workforce.

The views expressed by Ogundele Alaka, Oginni and Ogunyomi (2013) on creating an environment of peace and harmony corroborated the position of Oginni (2017) and added that to achieve this, the following condition should be put in place:

a) A good relationship between senior management and the employees.

b) A harmonious environment within the enterprise.

c) Stable and virile trade union

d) Fair treatment without disaffection

These conditions were summarized in the views of Oginni and Omoyele (2019) that the extent to which these conditions were being met such would be the inverse corresponding alignment between physical, psychological condition of work and industrial peace and harmony i.e. the higher the degree of agreement the lower the stress being experienced by employees in their respective place of work although Oginni and Omoyele (2019) added sound human resource practices, mutual respect and trust among all stake holders in business organisation.

Conclusion

The focus of the paper was to examine the way the work environment, as well as the organic structure of the organization was designed to be a major source of stress in the world of work, on the basis of the findings, there are some salient points that can be used to conclude the paper. It identified different causes of stress with respective impact wherein death of spouse was found to be ranked above while Minor violation of law was ranked as the least among those causes of stress examined. Individual with type B are less reactive to some of the causes of stress and management of stress is of two folds i.e.

concern for individual and concern for the organisation in order to achieve industrial peace and harmony. The paper then concluded that the physical and psychological conditions of work in any organisation will determine the quantum of industrial peace and harmony to be enjoyed at any given time by any organisation.

Recommendations

On the basis of findings and conclusion, the following are the recommendations:

1. That there is need to understand the emotional conditions of employees and show empathy in order to foster sense of identity and belongingness.

2. That the physical work environment should be structured is such a way that it will be conducive for employees to function effectively to achieve organisational objectives without prejudice to their health.

3. That division of work into various units not be stress prone rather makes them interesting either at individual or collective level as well as at organisational level.

4. That management of every organisation should avoid unfair labour practices especially in the areas of collective or individual agreement, promotion and reward administration.

5. That unnecessary workloads for employees should be avoided and should also show concern for their wellbeing.

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