

Conceptual Article

JOB STRESS

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Abstract

Stress is a body's reaction to demanding situations, resulting in a series of automatic physical and psychological changes. Factors that cause or contribute to stress, known as stressors, vary across age groups. Teenagers often experience stress due to academic pressures, family conflicts, and peer influences, whereas adults may encounter stress from work responsibilities, family conflicts, serious illness, or loss of loved ones. Understanding the sources and effects of stress is crucial for implementing strategies to manage it effectively and maintain overall well-being.

Keywords: Job Stress, Stressors, Teenagers, Adults, Work-Life Balance, Psychological Health

Academic Paper related to Minor Research Project (UGC)

Stress is a body's reaction to a demanding situation. A series of physical changes takes place automatically when a person is in a highly stressful situation. Something that causes or contributes to stress is called stressor. Stressors for teenagers include grades and school work, family arguments and peer pressures. For adults, stressors might include work responsibilities and family conflicts. Other stressors are serious illness, death in the family, poor eating habits, lack of physical activity, feeling of loneliness, a change or loss of friends. Regular physical activity will reduce mental stress, enhance psychological wellbeing and a positive attitude towards life.

The nature of work is changing at whirlwind speed perhaps now more than ever before. Job stress poses a threat to the health of workers and, in turn, to the health of organizations.

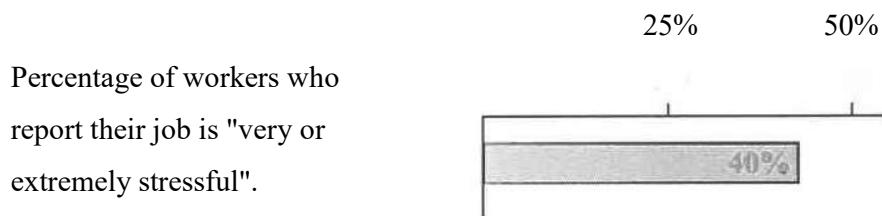
Job Stress

Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead to poor health and even injury.

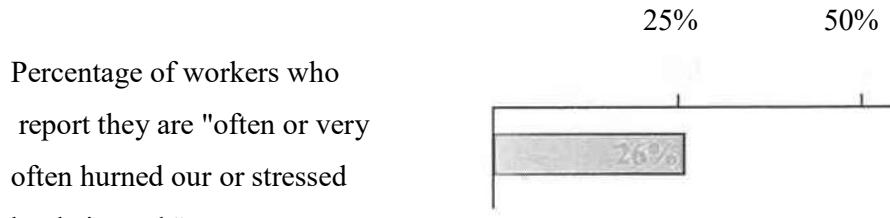
Research on job stress has the following inputs.

- * One-fourth of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives.
-Northwestern National Life
- * Three-fourths of employees believe the worker has more on-the-job stress than a generation ago.
-Princeton Survey Research Associates
- * Problems at work are more strongly associated with health complaints than are any other life stressor-more so than even financial problems or family problems.
-St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Co.

Survey by Northwestern National Life



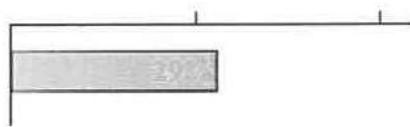
Survey by the Families and Work Institute



Survey by Yale University



Percentage of workers who report they feel "quite a bit or extremely stressed at work".



Fortunately, research on job stress has greatly expanded in recent years. But despite this attention, confusion remains about signs, the causes, effects, and prevention of job stress.

Signs of Job Stress

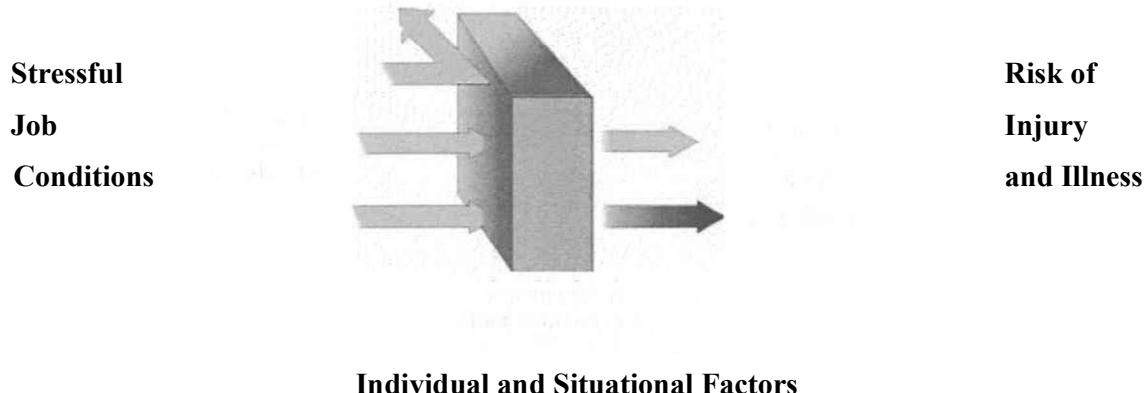
- * Headache
- * Sleep Disturbances
- * Difficulty in concentrating
- * Short temper
- * Upset stomach
- * Job dissatisfaction
- * Low Morale

Causes of Job Stress

Nearly everyone agrees that job stress results from the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. Worker characteristics versus working conditions is the primary cause of job stress. According to one school of thought, differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping style are most important in predicting whether certain job conditions will result in stress. What is stressful for one person may not be a problem for other person. This viewpoint leads to prevention strategies that focus on workers and ways to help them cope with demanding job conditions. Although the importance of individual differences cannot be ignored, scientific evidence suggests that certain working conditions are stressful to most people.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) job stress model suggests that job stress is a mixture of job conditions and situational factors.

NIOSH Model of Job Stress



Individual factors include the ability to adopt a positive mental attitude, optimism and a positive outlook in the face of stress. Situational factors may include having a supportive home and/or work environment, or having adequate work life balance.

Individual and situational factors that can help to reduce the effects of stressful working conditions include the following:

- * Balance between work and family or personal life
- * A support network of friends and coworkers
- * A relaxed and positive outlook

Primary Causes of Job Stress

- * **The Design of Tasks.** This refers to the activities done in performing the job. Some tasks that can be particularly stressful are critical decisions (e.g. emergency medical staff or police officers), excessive complexity and many alternative options (e.g. nursing and patient care), boredom and/or repetitiveness (e.g. factory line workers) and excessive time urgency accompanied by unrealistic expectations.
- * **Management Style.** A lack of participation in decision making by workers, poor communication and poor family-friendly policies can increase job stress.

- * **Interpersonal Relationships.** A lack of supportive relationships with supervisors and co-workers can increase job stress. This may play out in power struggles between workers and management, discrimination or sexual harassment in the workplace.
- * **Work Roles.** Conflicting or uncertain job expectation, having too much responsibility (or not enough) and having too many "hats to wear".
- * **Career Concerns.** A lack of opportunity for growth or advancement can increase job stress. Changes in the workplace and job security are also career concerns that can increase overall work stress.
- * **Environmental Conditions.** Dangerous and unwelcome environments can place pressure on workers and increase work stress. For example, some work may be exposed to noisy or polluted environments that may increase work related stress.

Knowing what is causing work stress can help individuals to put into place, stress management strategies to deal with work stress.

Job Stress and Health

Stress sets off an alarm in the brain, which responds by preparing the body for defensive action. The nervous system is aroused and hormones are released to sharpen the senses, quicken the pulse, deepen respiration, and tense the muscles. This response (sometimes called the fight or flight response) is important because it helps us defend against threatening situations. The response is preprogrammed biologically. Everyone responds in much the same way, regardless of whether the stressful situation is at work or home.

Short-lived or infrequent episodes of stress pose little risk. But when stressful situations go unresolved, the body is kept in a constant state of activation, which increases the rate of wear and tear to biological systems. Ultimately, fatigue or damage results, and the ability of the body to repair and defend itself can become seriously compromised. As a result, the risk of injury or disease escalates.

In the past 20 years, many studies have looked at the relationship between job stress and a variety of ailments. Mood and sleep disturbances, upset stomach and headache, and disturbed relationships with family and friends are examples of stress-related problems that are quick to develop and are commonly seen in these studies. These early signs of job stress are usually easy to recognize. But the effects of job stress on chronic diseases are more difficult

to see because chronic diseases take a long time to develop and can be influenced by many factors other than stress.

Evidence is rapidly accumulating to suggest that stress plays an important role in several types of chronic health problems—especially cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, and psychological disorders.

* **Cardiovascular Disease**

Many studies suggest that psychologically demanding jobs that allow employees little control over the work process increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

* **Musculoskeletal Disorders**

On the basis of research by NIOSH and many other organizations, it is widely believed that job stress increases the risk for development of back and upper-extremity musculoskeletal disorders.

* **Psychological Disorders**

Several studies suggest that differences in rates of mental health problems (such as depression and burnout) for various occupations are due partly to differences in job stress levels. (Economic and lifestyle differences between occupations may also contribute to some of these problems.)

* **Workplace Injury**

Although more study is needed, there is a growing concern that stressful working conditions interfere with safe work practices and set the stage for injuries at work.

* **Suicide, Cancer, Ulcers, and Impaired Immune Function**

Some studies suggest a relationship between stressful working conditions and these health problems. However, more research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn. -Encyclopaedia of Occupational Safety and Health.

According to **Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine**, Health care expenditures are nearly 50% greater for workers who report high levels of stress.

Stress Prevention and Job Performance

A healthy organization is defined as one that has low rates of illness, injury, and disability in its workforce and is also competitive in the marketplace. Healthy working

condition is necessary for any organisation to remain productive and profitable in today's economy. Studies show that stressful working conditions are actually associated with increased absenteeism, tardiness, and intentions by workers to quit their jobs-all of which have a negative effect on the bottom line.

Policies benefitting worker health include the following:

- * Recognition of employees for good work performance
- * Opportunities for career development
- * An organizational culture that values the individual worker
- * Management actions that are consistent with organizational values.

The best method to explore the scope and source of a suspected stress problem in an organization depends partly on the size of the organization and the available resources. Group discussions among managers, labour representatives, and employees can provide rich sources of information. Such discussions may be all that is needed to track down and remedy stress problems in a small company. In a larger organization, such discussions can be used to help design formal surveys for gathering input about stressful job conditions from large numbers of employees.

Interventions might be implemented rapidly like improved communication, stress management training, assertiveness training etc., to improve the stressful condition.. Many interventions produce initial effects that do not persist. Long-term evaluations are often conducted annually and are necessary to determine whether interventions produce lasting effects.

Job stress prevention should be seen as a continuous process to refine or redirect the intervention strategy.

Measures to Prevent Job Stress

- * Ensuring that the workload is in line with workers' capabilities and resources.
- * Designing jobs to provide meaning, stimulation, and opportunities for workers to use their skills.
- * Clearly defining workers' roles and responsibilities.
- * Giving workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs.

- * Improving communications-reduce uncertainty about career development and future employment prospects.
- * Providing opportunities for social interaction among workers.
- * Establishing work schedules that are compatible with demands and responsibilities outside the job

Conclusion

Job stress comes in different forms and affects one's mind and body in different ways. Too much stress or being under stress for too long isn't good for our health. Constant stress can make us more likely to get sick often. It can make chronic pain worse and can also lead to long-term health issues. Job stress could be reduced by learning how to manage time and job duties.

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