

Mental Health and Wellbeing at Workplace

Sandhya Peyush

Assistant Professor at Bethany College of Nursing, India

Abstract: *Workplace is a major part of our lives. It is where we spend much of our time, where we get our income and often where we make our friends. Having a fulfilling job can be good for your mental health and wellbeing but a negative environment can lead to many kinds of physical and mental health problems. If the mental wellbeing of people at workplace is good for everyone it will enhance the personal and organizational growth and success, but if it is not properly maintained workplace stress can lead to mental disorders like depression and anxiety. It's important to protect the value by addressing mental health at work for the existing issues, for those at risk and for the workforce as a whole because a toxic working environment can be corrosive to our mental health.*

Keywords: Mental Health, Stress, Depression, Anxiety

1. Introduction

A key component of the World Health Organization (WHO) definition of health is the capacity of individual to participate in community life, rather than only health as the absence of disease. According to this definition, health refers to a "state of wellbeing in which the individual is able to work productively & fruitfully & is able to make contribution to the community & country.

Globally, more than 300 million people suffer from depression, 260 million suffer from anxiety disorder many of whom live with both condition. A report from 2017 states that in India 57 million people affected by depression i.e. 18 percent of the total number of people worldwide who suffer from the condition.

A 2016 survey of 200,000 professionals employed across 30 Indian firms found that 46 percent reported extreme stress as a consequence of their work. Pressure related to job even caused individual to contemplate suicide. A report WHO led study estimates that depression & anxiety disorders cost the global economy US \$ 1 trillion each year in loss of productivity.

A negative working environment may lead to many mental problems, harmful use of substances or alcohol, absenteeism & lost productivity. Workplaces where mental health is promoted & support is given to people with mental disorders is likely to reduce absenteeism & increase the productivity.

2. Definition

Mental Health (WHO):

Mental Health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively & fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

Stress:

Stress is the negative emotional & physiological process that occurs as individual try to adjust to or deal with environment circumstances that disrupt, or threaten to disrupt their daily functioning.

Common causes of work related stress:

- Long working hours
- Heavy workload
- Changes within the organization
- Tight deadlines
- Changes to duties
- Job insecurity
- Lack of autonomy
- Boring work
- Over – supervision
- Inadequate working environment
- Lack of proper resources
- Lack of equipment
- Few promotional activities
- Harassment
- Discrimination
- Poor relationship with colleagues or bosses
- Crisis incidents such as workplace death.

Warning signs of work related stress:

The sign and symptoms of work related stress can be physical, psychological and behavioural

Physical Symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Muscular tension
- Headaches
- Heart palpitations
- Sleeping difficulties such as insomnia
- Gastrointestinal upsets such as diarrhoea or constipation

Psychological Symptoms:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Discouragement
- Irritability
- Pessimism – the feeling that things will turn out badly
- Feeling of being overwhelmed and unable to cope
- Cognitive difficulties such as a reduced ability to concentrate or make decisions.

Behavioural Symptoms

- An increase in sick days or absenteeism
- Aggression

Volume 7 Issue 10, October 2018

www.ijsr.net

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

- Diminished creativity and initiative
- A drop in work performance
- Problems with interpersonal relationship
- Mood swings and irritability
- Lower tolerance of frustration and impatience
- Disinterest
- Isolation

3. How to Reduce Workplace Stress

1) **Share your feeling with family and friends:** Sometimes the best stress-reducer is simply sharing your feelings with someone close to you. The act of talking it out and getting support and sympathy—especially face-to-face—can be a highly-effective way of blowing off steam and regaining your sense of calm.

- **Take support from your co-workers.** Having a solid support system at work can help you to get out from the negative effects of job stress. If you don't have a close friend at work, you can take steps to be more social with your coworkers.
- **Increase social contact with friends and family members.** Increasing social contact at work, having a strong network of supportive friends and family members is extremely important to managing stress in all areas of your life.
- **Build new satisfying friendships.** If you don't feel that you have anyone to turn to—at work or in your free time—it's never too late to build new friendships. Meet new people with common interests by taking a class or joining a club, or by volunteering your time.

2) **Have regular exercise and balanced nutrition:** When you're overly focused on work, it's easy to neglect your physical health. But when you're supporting your health with good nutrition and exercise, you're stronger and more resilient to stress.

- a) **Do regular exercise:** Aerobic exercise activity that raises your heart rate and makes you sweat is a hugely effective way to lift your mood, increase energy, sharpen focus, and relax both the mind and body. Rhythmic movement such as walking, running, dancing, drumming, etc. is especially soothing for the nervous system. For maximum stress relief, try to get at least 30 minutes of activity on most days.
- b) **Make smart, Stress - busting food choices:**
 - **Minimize sugar and refined carbs.** When you're stressed, you may crave sugary snacks, baked goods, or comfort foods such as pasta or French fries. But these "feel-good" foods quickly lead to a crash in mood and energy, making symptoms of stress worse not better.
 - **Reduce your intake of foods that can adversely affect your mood,** such as caffeine, trans fats, and foods with high levels of chemical preservatives or hormones.
 - **Eat more Omega-3 fatty acids to give your mood a boost.** The best sources are fatty fish, seaweed, flaxseed, and walnuts.
 - **Avoid nicotine.** Smoking when you're feeling stressed may seem calming, but nicotine is a powerful stimulant, leading to higher, not lower, levels of anxiety.

3) **Have regular sleeping pattern:** Irregular sleep interferes with your daytime productivity, creativity, problem-solving skills, and ability to focus. The better rested you are, the better equipped you'll be to tackle your job responsibilities and cope with workplace stress.

- **Improve the quality of your sleep** by making healthy changes to your daytime and nightly routines. For example, go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Aim for 8 hours a night—the amount of sleep most adults need to operate at their best.

• **Turn off screens one hour before bedtime.** The light emitted from TV, tablets, smart phones, and computers suppresses your body's production of melatonin and can severely disrupt your sleep.

• **Avoid stimulating activity and stressful situations before bedtime** such as catching up on work. Instead, focus on quiet, soothing activities, such as reading or listening to soft music, while keeping lights low.

4) **Prioritize and organize:** When job and workplace stress threatens to overwhelm you, there are simple, practical steps you can take to regain control.

a) **Time management tips for reducing job stress:**

- **Create a balanced schedule.** All work and no play is a recipe for burnout. Try to find a balance between work and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits, daily responsibilities and downtime.
- **Leave earlier in the morning.** Even 10-15 minutes can make the difference between frantically rushing and having time to ease into your day. If you're always running late, set your clocks and watches fast to give yourself extra time and decrease your stress levels.
- **Plan regular breaks.** Make sure to take short breaks throughout the day to take a walk, chat to a friendly face, or practice a relaxation technique. Also try to get away from your desk or work station for lunch. It will help you relax and recharge and be more, not less, productive.
- **Establish healthy boundaries.** Do not emails or phone calls at home and during weekends.
- **Don't over-commit yourself.** Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day.

b) **Task management tips for reducing job stress:**

- **Prioritize tasks.** Tackle high-priority tasks first. If you have something particularly unpleasant to do, get it over with early. The rest of your day will be more pleasant as a result.
- **Break projects into small steps.** If a large project seems overwhelming, focus on one manageable step at a time, rather than taking on everything at once.
- **Delegate responsibility.** You don't have to do it all yourself. Let go of the desire to control every little step. You'll be letting go of unnecessary stress in the process.
- **Be willing to compromise.** Sometimes, if you can both bend a little at work, you'll be able to find a happy middle ground that reduces the stress levels for everyone.

5) **Break bad habits that contribute work place stress:** Many of us make job stress worse with negative

thoughts and behavior. If you can turn around these self-defeating habits, you'll find employer-imposed stress easier to handle.

- **Resist perfectionism.** When you set unrealistic goals for yourself, you're setting yourself up to fall short. Aim to do your best, no one can ask for more than that.
- **Flip your negative thinking.** If you focus on the downside of every situation and interaction, you'll find yourself drained of energy and motivation. Try to think positively about your work, avoid negative-thinking co-workers, and pat yourself on the back about small accomplishments, even if no one else does.
- **Don't try to control the uncontrollable.** Many things at work are beyond our control—particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.
- **Look for humor in the situation.** When used appropriately, humor is a great way to relieve stress in the workplace. When you or those around you start taking things too seriously, find a way to lighten the mood by sharing a joke or funny story.

6) Be proactive about your job and your workplace duties:

When we feel uncertain, helpless, or out of control, our stress levels are the highest. Here are some things you can do to regain a sense of control over your job and career.

- **Talk to your employer about workplace stressors.** Healthy and happy employees are more productive, so your employer has an incentive to tackle workplace stress whenever possible. Rather than rattle off a list of complaints, let your employer know about specific conditions that are impacting your work performance.
- **Clarify your job description.** Ask your supervisor for an updated description of your job duties and responsibilities.
- **Request a transfer.** If your workplace is large enough, you might be able to escape a toxic environment by transferring to another department
- **Ask for new duties.** If you've been doing the exact same work for a long time, ask to try something new: a different grade level, a different sales territory, a different machine.
- **Take time off.** If burnout seems inevitable, take a complete break from work. Go on vacation.

4. How Employers can reduce stress at Work Place

- **Consult your employees.** Talk to them about the specific factors that make their jobs stressful. Some things, such as failing equipment, understaffing, or a lack of supervisor feedback may be relatively straightforward to address. Sharing information with employees can also reduce uncertainty about their jobs and futures.
- **Communicate with your employees one-on-one.** Listening attentively face-to-face will make an employee feel heard and understood and help to lower

their stress and yours even if you're unable to change the situation.

- **Deal with workplace conflicts in a positive way.** Respect the dignity of each employee; establish a zero-tolerance policy for harassment.
- **Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their jobs.** Get employee input on work rules, for example. If they're involved in the process, they'll be more committed.
- **Avoid unrealistic deadlines.** Make sure the workload is suitable to your employees' abilities and resources.
- **Clarify your expectations.** Clearly define employees' roles, responsibilities, and goals. Make management actions fair and consistent with organizational values.
- **Offer rewards and incentives.** Praise good work performance verbally and organization-wide. Schedule potentially stressful periods followed by periods of fewer tight deadlines. Provide opportunities for social interaction among employees.

References

- [1] www.who.int/mentalhealth/intheworkplace
- [2] <https://ijmhs.biomedcentral.com>
- [3] <https://www.firstpost.com/living/mentalhealth>
- [4] <https://www.helpguide.org/stressatworkplace>