

JOB STRESS AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO EMPLOYEES WORKING IN BPOS

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Abstract

Job stress is negatively related to performance. In other words, higher the stress, lower the performance. Workplace stress derives from many sources. It can be a demanding boss, annoying co-workers, rebellious students, angry customers, hazardous conditions, long commutes and a never-ending workload. Your work performance is also affected by stressors such as family relationships, finances and a lack of sleep stemming from fears and anxieties about the future. How you handle the effects of stress depends on whether it is easier to change the situation or change your attitude toward it. In order to maximize the return on investment organizations are empowering employees to work to their fullest potential.

In India, the scenario of BPO sector is encouraging. Managing BPO employees in terms of creating fun at work, keeping them motivated towards organizational goals, increasing their job satisfaction, performance level and to retain them in order to sustain competitiveness in the market are the major issues for any bpo organization. Stress at work is a relatively new phenomenon of modern lifestyles. The nature of work has gone through drastic changes over the last century and it is still changing at whirlwind speed. They have touched almost all professions, starting from an artist to a surgeon, or a commercial pilot to a sales executive. With change comes stress will appear automatically. Job stress poses a threat to physical health.

The business process outsourcing (BPO) industry in India has always been characterized by ungodly hours, monotonous job, low perceived value, dispirited efficiency resulting to high attrition level. Notwithstanding the ever rising attrition rate, it has become critical for the companies to satisfy their employees in order to retain them. The purpose of this paper is to determine what and how job-related and demographic variables are associated with employee satisfaction of the BPO employees. This paper has made an attempt to find out the job stress factors affecting the performance of the employees.

Introduction

Stress is a biological term which refers to the consequences of the failure of a human or animal body to respond appropriately to emotional or physical threats to the organism, whether actual or imagined. Stress refers to the strain from the conflict between our external environment and us, leading to emotional and physical pressure. In our fast paced world, it is impossible to live without stress, whether you are a student or a working adult. There is both positive and negative stress, depending on each individual's unique perception of the tension between the two forces.

Stress at work is a relatively new phenomenon of modern lifestyles. The nature of work has gone through drastic changes over the last century and it is still changing at whirlwind speed. They have touched almost all professions, starting from an artist to a surgeon, or a commercial pilot to a sales executive. With change comes stress will appear automatically. Job stress poses a threat to physical health. Work related stress in the life of organized workers, consequently, affects the health of organizations. Job stress is a chronic disease caused by conditions in the workplace that negatively affect an individual's performance and overall well-being of his body and mind.

Job stress is negatively related to performance. In other words, higher the stress, lower the performance. Before it was believed that moderate levels of stress would energize employees and enhance their performance. But this belief is not held to be true now. The assumption valid now is that performance will be disrupted even by relatively low level of stress. There are some valid reasons for this statement. They are,

1. Even relatively mild stress distracts an employee. Individuals experiencing stress tend to focus on the unpleasant feelings and emotions rather than on the task at hand and as a result their performance suffers.
2. Prolonged or repeated exposure even to mild levels of stress may have harmful effects on health and this may interfere with effective performance.
3. Finally, a large body of research indicates that as arousal increases, task performance may at first rise, but at some point begins to fall.

Business Process Outsourcing

The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in the global scenario. India's BPO industry is known for its massive turnover and its huge employment base. Current environment is the business environment as it is giving birth to the corporate advancement in the country. BPO sector is also becoming the part Indian economy as the tremendous growth of the BPO sector over the past few years has resulted in considerable changes in the lives of its young workforce.

In India, almost 70 per cent of the total youngster population is doing job in the BPO. Employment in the BPO sector has meant that young adults are reaching their career milestones and financial goals much earlier than before, surveys and evidence show that workers in the BPO sector experience high levels of stress as a result of working in closely monitored environments with pressure to meet.

BPO's are becoming increasingly popular in today's business, where many companies have centralized customer service and support functions. BPO's are generally large offices with representatives who either make or receive phone calls. Depending on the type of work, BPO's may have a single office employing a few people or large office with thousands of employees. The main activity in BPO's is answering inbound calls, such as a bank that gives out a toll-free number for customers needing help. At the same time there are some BPO's that focus on outbound calls too. With increase in outsourcing, BPO's are also becoming popular.

By way of outsourcing, companies contract out some functions to other companies located mostly in cost effective destinations like India. In this field India enjoys several advantages over a number of developed countries. In India we have large pool of qualified people, English speaking graduates and IT professionals. In addition to this India have some other advantages like cheap labor, flexibility in working hours and time zone difference. This is the reason why a number of MNCs are outsourcing their business activities to India. BPO's are comparatively a recent introduction to the world of career options in India. The career avenues provided by BPO's is one of the best suited and growing option which even a fresher can opt for. With the opening up of the Indian economy and the advent of globalization more and more companies from abroad are basing or outsourcing their services to India.

Overtime Affect Employee Performance

Overtime can have an enormous impact on employee performance and productivity. The combination of regular overtime and the potential for performance problems can cause serious issues for employers. Detecting how overtime affects employee performance is crucial to several aspects of running a business. Business demand and productivity are concerns that arise out of regular or excessive overtime, as are factors such as employee satisfaction, teamwork and sustaining a collegial work environment.

Factors Affecting Employee Performance

An effective employee is a combination of a good skill set and a productive work environment. Many

factors affect employee performance that managers need to be aware of and should work to improve at all times. To get the maximum performance from employees, you need to provide them with the tools they need to succeed.

Managerial Standards

Managerial standards can be a factor in motivating or de-motivating employees. Managerial standards should be in line with the job duties outlined in the job description outlined by human resources. The background of the employee, including their educational history, is also outlined in a job description. Managers should keep their expectations in line with the duties assigned to the employee. By expecting more from a employee than they were hired for, or than their background has prepared them for, can diminish employee performance.

Motivation

To get the best performance from employees, there needs to be some sort of motivation beyond the weekly pay check. Motivation can come in the form of financial incentives, the opportunity to get involved in company projects, a career path that leads to management and direct involvement from management into the daily tasks. Effective motivation can create a productive work force, but a lack of motivating factors can leave employees searching for reasons to give their maximum effort.

Commitment

Employees that feel as though the company has made a commitment to employee success tend to perform better, according to Personnel Systems Associates. Commitment means offering a competitive rate of pay and benefits package, offering assistance in paying for employee's higher education costs, developing a regular training schedule that keeps employees updated on company changes and gives pertinent information for employees to do their jobs and upgrading equipment to make sure that employees have the most efficient technology available to do their work. Commitment shown by the company is returned in the form of commitment from employees.

Employee Evaluations

An effective employee evaluation is an interactive process where the manager gives his input on the employee's performance, and the employee gets the chance to point out what she has learned throughout the year. Managers create a plan along with the employee for the coming year on how the employee can develop and improve their performance. Comprehensive employee evaluations are important to the ongoing performance of employees.

The BPOs and the Employees working in BPOs can follow some Strategies to overcome Stress for better Performance.

Organizational Coping Strategies

Organizational coping strategies are more of proactive nature, that is, they attempt at removing existing potential stressors and prevent the onset of stress of individual job holders. Following are organizational coping techniques and efforts:

1. Supportive organizational climate:

Many of the organizational stressors emerge because of faulty organizational processes and practices. To a very great extent these can be controlled by creating supportive organizational climate. Supportive organizational climate depends upon managerial leadership rather than the use of power and money to

control organizational behavior. The focus is primarily on participation and involvement of employee's indecision making process. Such a climate develops belongingness among people which helps them to reduce their stress.

2.Job Enrichment.

A major source of stress is the monotonous and disinteresting jobs being performed by employees in the organization. The jobs can be enriched. Improving content factors such as responsibility, recognition, opportunity for achievement and advancement, or improving core job characteristics, such skill variety, task identity task significance, autonomy, and feedback may lead to motivation, feeling sense of responsibility, and utilizing maximum capability at the work .such a phenomenon helps in reducing stress.

3.Organizational Role clarity.

People experience stress when they are not clear about what they are expected to do in the organization. This may happen because either there is ambiguity in the role or there is role conflict. Such a situation can be overcome by defining role more clearly. Role analysis technique helps both managers and employees to analyze what the job entails and what the expectations are. Breaking down the job to its various components clarifies the role of the job incumbent for the entire system. This helps to eliminate imposing unrealistic expectations on the individual. Role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload can be minimized, consequently leading to reduced stress.

4.Career planning and counseling.

Career planning and counseling help the employees to obtain professional advice regarding career paths that would help them to achieve personal goals. It also makes them aware of what additional qualifications, training and skills they should acquire for career advancement.

5.Stress control workshops and employee assistant programmes.

The organization can hold periodical workshops for control and reduction of stress. Such workshops may help individuals to learn the dynamics of stress and methods of overcoming their personal and family problems. This arrangement may include managing personal finance, dealing with family problems, dealing with health problems, and dealing with other kind of personal and family stresses.

6.Flex time.

Allowing workers to start or end the workday earlier or later can reduce work/life stress, especially for working parents. Flex time can also reduce the stress of commuting in rush hour traffic.

7.Job sharing.

This allows at least two people trained to perform each job, enabling each employee to have time off without losing productivity.

Individual Coping Strategies

Stress may cause within organizational context and outside. Therefore coping strategies may be adopted by individuals to come out of their stress and to balance their life and work. Following are the major individuals stress coping strategies.

1. Physical exercise.

Physical exercise is a good strategy to get body fit and to overcome stress. Physical exercise of different types such as walking, jogging, swimming, playing etc., are good methods of overcoming stress. The role of yoga a scientific techniques of physical exercise to keep body fit and to overcome stress has been recognized in most part of the world. Physical exercise helps people to cope- up with stress.

2. Relaxation.

Impact of stress can be overcome by relaxation. The relaxation can be simple one or some specific techniques of relaxation such as biofeedback and meditation. In biofeedback the individual learns the internal rhythms of a particular body process through electronic signals. In biofeedback the person can learn to control body process. Meditation helps to rest the body physically and emotionally. Transcendental meditation is one of the more popular practices of meditation. In this practice the mediator tries to meditate for two periods of fifteen to twenty minutes a day concentrating on the repetition of some mantra. Any meditation essentially involves a relatively quiet environment, a comfortable position, a repetitive mental stimulus and a passive attitude. Meditation has been recognized as a powerful technique for reducing stress. Whether a person takes easy one or specific relaxation technique the intent is to eliminate immediately stressful situation or manage a prolonged stressful situation more effectively.

3. Work – Home Transition.

Work home transaction is also like a relaxation technique. In this technique, a person may attend to less pressure inducing type or routine work during the last 30 or 60 minutes of work time. For instance during the last hour of work the person can view the day's activities, list the priorities of the activities that need to be attended to the next day. Thus he can finish his days work and come back in relaxed manner.

4. Cognitive Therapy.

Because of increasing stress, special cognitive therapy techniques have been developed by psychologists. In these techniques lectures and interactive discussion sessions are arranged to help participants to; (I) recognize events at work and what cognitions they elicit; (II) become aware of the effects of such cognitions on their physiological and emotional responses; (III) systematically evaluate the objective consequences of events at work and (IV) replace self defeating cognitions that unnecessarily arouse strain.

5. Networking.

Networking is the formation of close associations with trusted, empathetic co-workers and colleagues who are good listeners and confidence builders. Such persons provide mental support to get the person through stressful situation.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the factors causing job stress.
2. To explain how the job stress factors influencing the performance of the employees working in BPOs.
3. To find out the modern coping strategies followed by the employer and employee to overcome their stress for the purpose of improving their performance.

Scope of the Study

This conceptual study helps to know about the factors causing job stress and explains how the job stress factor affecting the performance of the employees. This study has made an attempt to bring out the modern coping strategies followed by the employee and the employers to overcome their stress and to improve their performance.

Limitations of the Study

There are many factors affecting the performance of the employees. Job stress is one of the factors affecting the performance of the employees. In this study, only job stress factor alone taken for research. Likewise job stress is common in the entire field and in all the occupation, but in this study BPO field only considered.

Sources of Data

A sample of 100 employees working in various BPOs in Chennai city has been selected and primary data has been collected from those employees. Data has been collected from various secondary sources like journals, news papers, Books, websites, conferences etc.

Statistical Tool Used

The collected data had been analyzed by chi-square test.

Analysis and Interpretations

Based on the data collected analysis and interpretations were made to find out the result of the study.

Table Showing Opinion of the Different Age Group Employees Saying that Jobs Stress is Affecting their Performance.

Data has been collected from employees coming under different age groups to know their opinion regarding whether their job stress is affecting their job performance or not.

H₀= There is no significant differences in the opinion of the different age group employees about impact of job stress on job performance.

H₁= There is a significant difference in the opinion of the different age group employees about impact of job stress on job performance.

Table No: 1.

| Age\ Opinion | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|--------------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| 20-25 | 9 | 20 | 4 | 1 | 34 |
| 26-30 | 7 | 19 | 2 | 2 | 30 |
| 31-40 | 8 | 18 | 2 | 1 | 29 |
| >40 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Total | 25 | 61 | 9 | 5 | 100 |

Source: primary data

The above table shows that among the various age group employees majority 86% (25% and 61%) of the employees strongly agree and agree that their job stress is affecting their job performance.

| | |
|-----|-------|
| CV | 3.156 |
| TV | 16.92 |
| DOF | 9 |
| LS | 5% |

CV < TV=> Ho accepted

There is no significant difference in the opinion of the different age group employee, that their job stress is affecting their job performance.

Irrespective of the age job stress is affecting the job performance of the employees.

Table Showing Opinion of the Male and Female Employees, that they are Having Stress in Their Work Place.

H₀=There is no significant differences in the opinion of the male and female employees regarding stress in the work place.

H₁= There is a significant difference in the opinion of the male and female employees regarding stress in the work place.

Table No: 2

| Gender\ Opinion | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|--------------------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|-------|
| Male | 22 | 52 | 5 | 1 | 80 |
| Female | 6 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 20 |
| Total | 28 | 61 | 9 | 2 | 100 |

Source: primary data

The above table clearly indicates that among the collected sample 80% of the employees are male and 20% of the employees are female. Majority of the male and female employees agree that they are facing stress in the work place. The table shows that stress is common to all.

| | |
|-----|-------|
| CV | 5.628 |
| TV | 7.81 |
| DOF | 3 |
| LS | 5% |

CV < TV=> Ho accepted

The result shows that there is no significant difference in the opinion of the male and female employees regarding their stress in the work place.

Irrespective of the gender both male and female employees are experiencing stress in the work place.

Findings

1. Majority of the employees agree that the job stress factors or job stress is affecting their performance. They cannot able to concentrate on their work properly.
2. Majority of the employees agree that they are experiencing stress in the work place irrespective of the gender.
3. Both the employer and the employee are following some stress coping strategies to overcome the stress.

Suggestions

The employer can control certain stress factors which affect the employees in performing their job. The employees also can try to overcome their stress through some exercises, yoga and meditation. The employers can extend their support to the employees to get rid of the job stress.

Conclusion

Stress is very common in day to day life. Now a day’s it’s become our part of life. We can overcome stress but we cannot avoid stress. Stress is not bad all the time. But it occurs during the work time it will affect our performance in work. The result of the study reveals that both the male and female employees are experiencing stress in their work place. Irrespective of the age majority of the employees agree that the job stress is affecting their job performance.

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