JOB STRESS AND WORK ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

Stress is the prevalent disease of 21st century which affects human in different conditions. Stress is the result of interaction between a stimulus and the given response. One of the main sources of stress in the life of each person is their job, and today job stress has become a prevalent and costly issue in job environments. Ethics on the other hand has been one of the topics existing since the early days of mankind birth and not only has it not lost its importance of existence over the time, but also it has gained more value in this period of time, to the extent that today the discussion of social responsibilities and worldwide standards of human ethics are challenging topics in every administrative organization. It is safe to say that in modern organizations, most of behaviors and decisions of employees and managers are under the effect of ethics. Work ethics can affect the performance through better regulation of relationships, reduction of differences and conflicts, increasing the environment for understandings and cooperation and also reduction of costs for supervising. In addition, work ethics increases employee's commitment and acceptance of their responsibility which in turn results in personal and group performance optimization. Job stress and the resulting complications cause personnel to do their work related responsibilities with disappointment and lack of motivation. Therefore in result, their work ethics will be reduced.

Keywords: Job Stress, Theories of Job Stress, Work Ethics and Factors Affecting Work Ethics

INTRODUCTION

Job stress appears whenever there is a higher expectations from personnel compared to their responsibilities and abilities. According to Karasek`s demand control theory, the jobs with high mental demands and less decision making domain have higher related job stress (Hezaveii *et al.,* 2012). Job stress is highly effective to individual and organizational performance. Stress is a natural and predictable experience in life and work process of which not all the results are negative, but sometimes it has negative outcomes and sometimes positive. The positive side leads to individual effort and motivation, and the negative side is that, job stress can affect employees' ability for effective performance in their responsibilities.

The most harmful effect of stress is learning disorder. Personnel`s with high levels of stress would have low self-steam and have weakness in work process controlling. Stresses of this kind will have a catastrophic effect on their work related motivation, performance and ethics (Mir fakhroddini, 2012).

Job stress can expose human to physical, emotional and mental exhaustion. Physical exhaustion disables the individual and they suffer from intense physical fatigue which usually results in insomnia. Emotional exhaustion makes individuals to lose their emotional resources and causes spent which results in depression and disappointment. Mental exhaustion makes the individual to have a negative idea about their job, their organization and co-staff and makes them reckless of other`s feelings and demands. So this king of exhaustion overcomes the whole working system of the personnel (Behnoodi, 2005).

On the other hand, one of the main issues causing different problems for worldwide organizations is the problems raised from working against work ethics in different societies. Professional working ethics has cross-organizational backgrounds and also results in cross-organizational effects and results. Promoting professional work ethics in organization and sublimity of organizational culture and ethics not only

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creates happy and favorable environment to optimize the efficiency, but also beyond the organization, they have effective role in society (Barati, 2001).

Job Stress

Job stress means every physical or mental event which causes physical harm or mental discomfort and in long term it results in low performance of individuals and the organization (Gholamnegad and Nikpeyman, 2008). Job related mental pressures are related to stresses which in high levels may cause physical, mental and behavioristic harm to individuals, endanger their health, and threaten organizational purposes and reduce individual`s performance quality. Every year, job stress and its related outcomes waste hundreds of business hours and because of resulted disorders and illnesses, lots of people avoid going to the work (Davis and Nyvstorm, 1991).

For the first time in 30s, Hans sele[5], famous Austrian psychologist, who had emigrated from middle Europe to Canada, proposed the term stress (Behnoodi, 2005). John Estienne Betz describes stress as a term which is used by people in order to describe the factors irritating them and the use of this term by people is increases every day. From the medical point of view, stress is described as body erosion rate.

John Newman defines stress as a complicated collection of reactions such as emotional and mental reactions. In addition, stress is an ergogenic outcome which stimulates most of the body parts and puts it under pressure and actuates the whole human body.

Hindel`s team defines stress as a phenomenon endangering mental and physical health of people. The main reason of stress is using body beyond its abilities and its outcomes are harmful for individuals, families, society and organizations (Behnoodi, 2005).

Factors Causing Job Stress

Environmental Factors

In general classification one can distribute environmental factors of job stress into four groups including, lack of economic confidence, lack of political confidence, social evolutions and lack of technological confidence.

Whenever the economic is in a slump mood, a contracting condition governs the situation in which the individuals become increasingly concerned and anxious of their safety. Social and cultural evolutions such as, disrespecting social justice, the lack of a loving environment, the lack of friendship and healthy human relationships, disrespecting social and cultural laws by other people and the low cultural level of the people are some factors causing stress. Automation, computers, mechanical human beings and other aspects of technological phenomenon are considered as a threat for most people and that creates stress for them (Abzari and Saraydarian, 1997).

Organizational Factors

We can study organizational factors in four groups of organizational policies, organizational structure, organizational process and physical conditions of the organization.

Some high rank managers through their management methods rule out a special culture inside their organization which creates fear, horror, anxiety and tension between employees. In a short period of time, they force individuals to do a job regardless of suitable time proportion. With this line of work and behavior, they obviously put individuals under a massive mental stress (Abzari and Saraydarian, 1997).

The structure of and organization should be in harmony with its purposes. Therefore the lack of harmony between organizational structure with internal and external environmental elements such as human factors, can create lots of mental stress.

Incomplete correlations, the lack of effective information transition, the lack of feedback, injustice performance assessment and complication of purposes are examples of incomplete organizational processes which can create lots of mental stress for individuals. Every organization needs a harmony between the purposes of organization, managers and employees for its success. Any complication in these purposes will create mental stress. On the other hand in case of physical conditions of organization, if an organization lacks a proper physical condition, it will put employees under stress. Some examples of inappropriate environmental conditions are too high or too low temperatures, job related dangers and harmful results of work, light etc (the same source, 102-110).

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Job Related Factors

Ambiguity of the Role

Ambiguity of the role means a condition inside a job in which some necessary information needed for suitable work performance is insufficient or sometimes misleading, therefore an individual would not understand what expectations there are for his performance. In this condition, the source of stress is the lack of ability to appraisal the performance and ambiguity of the situation; for example let us assume that a new worker is hired in an industry. This worker besides knowing his new job related duties and responsibilities, also needs to get information about other aspects of the industry which are ambiguous for him. Another aspect of job stress which may occur is in the situation in which individuals feel some differences between managers and their related existing sources (Aghilinegad *et al.,* 2010).

Role Conflict

Role conflict in an organization is a situation in which the employees have to perform different antithetical and conflicting duties or a situation in which they are asked to perform two or multiple conflicting purposes. The key point here is that not only the role conflict can root from a single role which is directed to an individual, but also from different roles as well. Role conflict has different types. In some cases, role conflict occurs whenever an individual has conflicting expectations from a role performer and in some other cases it happens whenever people have antithetical and conflicting expectations from a performer of a role that is in contact with them (Abzari and Seraydaran, 1997).

Job Features

Job features which can cause job stress are divided into four groups including, work overload, low-load work, the rate and the type of duty and decision making ability. We can review the work overload from two points of view.

From one point of view the work overload is quantitative. Quantitative overload occurs whenever an individual does not have enough time to do all the works asked in his job. From other point of view work overload is qualitative. In this feature, the individual has enough time to do the required work, but their work demands a profession which the individual does not have. Low-load work is a situation in which the assigned work is not enough to use all capacity of the worker. In other words, the worker`s abilities and capabilities are not used in full capacity. While work overload imposes high demands from workers, low-load work is considered as a limit and deterrent.

Whenever individuals have higher capabilities compared to their work demands, they become tired and they lose their motivation.

Taking work responsibility is the main factor of stress and jobs concerning the responsibilities of other`s lives are considered highly stressful. Between doctors, nurses and the ones whose decisions have supporting role in the life of other people, there is higher probability of disease such as ulcer and high blood pressure. Studies have proved that the more the individual`s have job authorities the less they are exposed to occupational injury and vice versa; High stress follows low job authorities (Aghilinegad *et al.,* 2010).

Perception of the Role

At the time the organization members are placed in their roles to perform their duties, they need to play different roles. In case that the employees cannot understand and perform their roles, they will be considered incapable of doing their job and demanded duty. The requisite of suitable performance of demanded roles is to have a good cognition and perception of the roles. Whenever the individuals have a good understanding of these roles, they should be able to perform them perfectly and have enough ability to change between the roles, other vise the lack of this kind of compatibility will impose high stress and pressure upon the work staff (Abzari and Seraydaran, 1997).

Theories of Job Stress

1. Karasek`s Theory

This theory show us the effect of job demand`s reduction via the rate of work freedom and job support and limitations. The main key of this theory is that a job can be hard and without work pressure at the same time, because the other aspects of the same job create sources which can neutralize these duties.

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This theory surveys the relationship between the increase of control and health conditions and measures the predictable effects of the control on health conditions. This theory tells us that the less the job control, the better the individual`s health conditions and the more the job control, the less worse the individual`s mental and physical health conditions (Fletcher, 2002).

2. The Pine Theory

This theory is considered as one of the best theories of job stress, because it is suitable to predict the pressure levels of an equalized group and between different occupational groups. This theory considers stress as a result of harmony absence between three work factors.

A. Job demands

B. Job support

C. Job limits

This theory pinpoints this key feature; the main concept of support does not just imply the on aspects of social or individual losses, although the role of these aspects on the reduction of mental stress effects is well known. The main concept of support includes job factors such as having good realization of the work process and having good portion of autonomy and independence for occupational adjustment and performance. Supporting factors can play an importing role in job variables such as job and life satisfaction and affect them (Fletcher, 2002).

3. Vitamin Theory of Job Stress

This theory is based on different situations and not on individuals. This theory defines individual health as a feature affected by environmental and mental factors just like the effect of vitamins. Vitamins are vital for proper body performance and the lack of vitamins causes poor performance of human body. Anyway getting too much vitamins will have no additional useful effect mainly because their effect is limited. This theory tells us that, factors such as required wage rates, logical physical and environmental conditions which are academically appropriate and safe, occupational roles which have enough meaning, the capability of learning new techniques and learning new capabilities, diversity jobs and work rotation, job clarity and not having ambiguity about the future of the job and respecting personal privacy can reduce job stress and by putting a harmony between these factors, we can reduce job stress to a minimum level (Behnoodi, 2005).

4. The Theory of General Design or Disaster

In this theory concerning following factors which are as follows, will identify job stress making factors.

Perception of stress making factors in individual differences and their effect on individuals is different. Job pressure is not necessarily based on job conditions, but also other conditions and factors can be stressful as well. The jobs which do not have enriched environments are stressful. Stress is resulted by mutual effect of different factors, job and family based factors are not independent from each other, potential stress factor`s effects can change trough out the time, although the rate of stressful factors may not change. On the other hand the factors such as increasing job limits, reducing job support of any kind, differences in individuals' self-perception, the change in individuals' perception of environment and long term inability of confronting the stress in performing a job can cause disaster and create job stress (Behnoodi, 2005).

Work Ethics

Work ethics means the individual ethical responsibility based on a job. In one hand, work ethics just like personal ethics, concerns individual responsibility as a person and on the other hand against personal ethics, it concerns job related features as ethical responsibilities as well. An individual has ethical responsibilities as a person. His ethical responsibilities come from the job he has accepted and it means, if he had accepted another job, his ethical responsibilities would change as well (Qaramolki, 2004). Work ethics is common behavioral features inside a profession. Work ethics is management of human behavior and deed while performing professional work and work ethics is a branch of ethic science which studies occupational relationships. In all of these explanations, work ethics is considered as responsibilities and ethical demands of individuals in their jobs and respecting them is required according to it (Qaramolki, 2004).

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In other words, work ethics means a collection of dos and don'ts which the employees of an organization should respect in order to perfect the quantitative and qualitative conditions for the job they have accepted (Shahrakivahed *et al.,* 2010).

Factors Affecting Work Ethics

We can divide factors affecting work ethics in three different groups:

1. Macro level
2. Organizational level
3. Individual level

1. Macro Level

A. Cultural factors: Culture is a collection of traditions and costumes and common norms of a group of people. Culture is the environment in which a person is living or working and it affect the individual`s behavior and defines a series of dos and don'ts for that individual.

B. Economic factors: Factors such as inflation, the lack of liquidity and proper rewards can affect usual behavior of a person.

C. Technology: Using of today`s technologies has its own series of features. The use of some communication devices can in some levels reduce the inter-connection of employee and the customer, but on the other hand, it creates a new area of ethics.

D. Legal factors: Law is imposed upon a person via instructions and regulations and forces that person to perform under its rules (Ronaqi and Feizi, 2010).

2. Organizational Level

A. Competition: Creating a competitive environment can affect individuals negatively and positively.

B. Reward system: Using a system of behavior reinforcement via reward and negative reinforcement can be effective in continuing a process.

C. Job features: Specifications and features of a job consist of a series of job related principals. For example, archive or secretariat employees have features concerning their job which cannot be compared to a sales person. The ways of connection for every job employee and their motivations for continuing the job are different.

D. Access to sources: Existing sources in every section of an organization and limitations of each source creates mutual tension between employees. These tensions may cause complications between employees and make them do thing which they would not have done under common conditions.

E. Organizational purposes: The thing that an organization wants to get to is considered its purpose. In this matter there are different ways of reaching that purpose and being close to purposes is considered a success. This matter affects people which are in the same or different conditions.

F. Performance assessment: The way of employees' performance assessment in a way that creates a competitive feeling between employees and if the wage rates become based on it, can change the performance and behavior of an individual who is in common conditions (Moeed far, 2007).

3. Individual Level

The factors such as personal beliefs, family teachings, individual attitudes and social relations are considered in this level (Ronaghi and Feyzi, 2010).

The Role of Work Ethics in Organizational Success

Work ethics can increase the predictability of and organization and it creates original, firm and full range trust for organization and the organization can succeed via relying on trust in attracting financial and credit resources. This will create internal motivation and stability in employees and managers, attracts expertized human resources and creates a firm position for organization via increasing the advantage of competitive environment.

Taking responsibilities in work ethics has an effective role in increasing the performance and effectiveness of an organization. The more ethical the organization can be, the more successful it will become and the more an organization lacks respecting the work ethics, the more it will fall. In every organization, proper ethical principles are considered as preconditions for proper strategic management and good ethical principles mean good organization. We should not forget that today's performance is

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makes tomorrow`s business and if we want a dynamic organization, today it is necessary for us to be concerned about having an ethical performance (Qaramolki, 2004).

The Relationship between Job Stress and Work Ethics

One of the new tensions of living in a modern world is having stress in job environments. Stress is the main cause of reducing of production, absence of employees and the collapse and adhesion of an organization. According to researchers, stress is resulted by different individual, group and organizational and cross-organizational factors. In these factors, work related relations between employees such as relation with managers, coworkers and subordinates inside the ethical environment of work are most effective ones (Soleymani *et al.*, 2012). Mental pressures resulted by job are considered as stresses which in intense cases may cause physical, mental and behaviorist dangers and endanger individuals health, and also these stresses can reduce general performance of employees via threatening organizational purposes (2010).

Each year, job stress and its tensions waste hundreds of work days and because of resulted tensions and disease, many people avoid going to work (Davis and Nyvstorm, 1991).

The research of (Apleboom *et al.*, 2010) contains the effect of environmental factors on nurses` stress, job satisfaction and employees' willingness to change their job. The purpose of this article is the research on the relationship between environmental factors such as sent, noise, light, color, perception of stress, job satisfaction and the willingness to change. It was realized in this article that job physical environment can negatively or positively affect stress of nurses and that stress can negatively reduce job satisfaction and result in job changing. The results show that there is a significant relationship between the noise and the resulted stress, job satisfaction and perception of stress, willingness to change and job satisfaction and perception of stress and willingness to change the job.

Ye (2009) surveyed the relationship between job stresses, job commitment and job satisfaction between nurses. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between job stress and job commitment and it is negative. Also there is a positive relationship between job commitment and job satisfaction. The researches have shown that religion and being senior have negative effect on job commitment.

Falanegan (2006) experimented the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction in nurses and the results showed that the minimum average point for sources of satisfaction consist the mutual performance of nurses, doctors, autonomy, professional base, responsibility conditions, organizational policies and laws and also there is a reverse relationship between nurses` job stress and job satisfaction and the relationship between job stress and job satisfaction can predict the performance pattern.

Jennifer, R.Bradley and Cart Rite (2004) surveyed the social support, job stress, and hygiene and job satisfaction between nurses in United States. The results show that organizational support has relationship with nurses` hygiene and job satisfaction and the more the support increases the less the nurses will have stress.

CONCLUSION

The results show that positive organizational environment in organizations can have significant effect on increasing work ethics and decreasing job stress. Therefore organizations have put serious attention to create an ethical environment without any tension, because positive environment in organizations can create potential individual abilities and qualities. In other words, hospitals can increase nurses` willingness to perform their job related duties via increasing an environment of correlations, creating welfare and a friendly atmosphere etc. In addition there is an important key feature which is the hospital managers should know effective features of their nurses and prepare conditions to get a better use of these features.

It is also important to say that better performance results in higher economic and mental rewards. If these rewards be considered by nurses as equal, there would be a higher positive work ethics and higher satisfaction. It is because the employees would feel that they are rewarded compared to their performance. On the other hand, if they feel that the reward is much less compared to their performance, there would be a resulted lack of satisfaction and their work ethics will decrease as well. At any conditions, individuals`

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satisfaction affects higher commitment, reduction of stress and tension and in result it will influence their performance.

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