

## **JOB STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG NRHM WORKERS.**

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### **Abstract**

The complexity of industrial, organizational and modernized life is a source of stress to all individuals. The nature of stress and its effect can be understood by identifying the stressors. This stress may lead to strain or long-term negative effects. A great part of such stress in life is caused by job or work. Work-related stress has gained importance because of its implications for employee dissatisfaction, lowered productivity, lowered physical and mental health of the employees. It has major implication in the NRHM department that plays a major role in the Health Index. As the Health workers are considered as the backbone of the NRHM department this paper aims to find out the job stressors and their implications on the job performance of health workers. Results indicate that 62.50% of NRHM workers have medium level of stress. Job security, job satisfaction and workload are found to impart stress on health workers.

### **Introduction**

Stress is a subject of interest to people and researchers of various fields. In the modern day-to-day life, stress is unavoidable. Every individual is subject to stress either knowingly or unknowingly. The source of such stress may be due to the nature of the individual, the group, the organization in which the individual is working and factors outside the organization. An optimum level of stress called Eu-stress leads to better performance and achievement. But long-term exposure to stress is dangerous to the individual, the people around him and the organization. One cannot avoid stress. But there are so many strategies to cope with stress. Understanding stress and adapting the coping strategies will be beneficial to the individuals as well as the organizations.

### **Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to find out the level of stress of NRHM workers. An attempt is also made to find out the impact of job satisfaction and significance, job clarity, Job feedback, job security, workload, working conditions, and interpersonal relations at work in creating stress among NRHM workers. An attempt is also made to find out the impact of job satisfaction and significance, job clarity, job feedback, job security, workload, working conditions, and interpersonal relations at work in creating stress among NRHM workers.

### **Method**

A job stressors questionnaire was administered on 40 health workers of NRHM department. The questionnaire contained statements about job clarity, job feedback, job security, workload, working conditions, interpersonal relations at work. Finally 40 completed questionnaires were obtained. Personal data like age, sex, monthly income, marital status and experience were also

collected.

#### The Background of Stress

The General adaptation Syndrome (GAS) propounded by Selye describes the prognosis of stress under three stages: Alarm Reaction Resistance and Exhaustion. In the alarm reaction stage, an outside stressor triggers the internal stress system of the body, which leads to a number of physiological and chemical reactions. If the stressor continues, then the GAS moves into the resistance stage, during which the body calls upon the organ or system concerned to deal with the stressor. If the stressor persists over a long period of time, exhaustion sets in. The GAS model is a physiologically oriented approach to stress. There are other dimensions like behavioral and psychological. An understanding of all such dimensions will help in the development of a healthy society.

#### The Impact of Stress

Stress has its implications on the organization side also. It leads to employee absence, withdrawal and poor job satisfaction. Higher levels of both general and job-related psychological distress any result in higher percentage of absenteeism. Gillian et al (2003) concluded that an increase in psychological distress was significantly related to an increase in subsequent absence and vice versa. A comparison of two aspects of psychological distress, anxiety and depression, as predictors of absence from work, found that although both job related depression and job-related anxiety were associated with absence levels, the relationship between anxiety and absence can be accounted for by depression. When the absence rate is high with one or two individuals, their work related difficulties can be identified through personal interview and counseling. If it is pertaining to a section or department, the problems can be identified through group discussion.

In a research that compares the experience of occupational stress across a large number of occupations, six occupations reported worse than average scores on each of the factors, namely, physical health, psychological well being and job satisfaction. These occupations include NRHM workers, ambulance workers, teachers, social services and customer services-call centers, prison officers and police. (Sheena Johnson, 2005). This result is similar to the findings of Catherine So-Kum Tang et al. (2001). Teachers in the course of their careers, experience a great deal of stress that may have obvious implications for their physical and mental health status. Burnout represents teachers negative responses to the mismatch between job requirements and their perceived abilities, self-efficacy and proactive attitude. Burnout is also associated with negative mental health.

Apart from this, events that involve work overload, uncooperative patients, criticism, negligent co-workers, lack of support from supervisors, and difficulties with physicians are associated with the feelings of stress for nurses. Feelings of job-related stress lead to feelings of depression that cause nurses to perform less effectively in the interpersonal and cognitive/motivational aspects of their job. (Stephan J. Widlo *et al.* 1986)

#### Results and Discussion

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In the job stressor questionnaire, some questions were positive and others were negative. Participants answered the questionnaire on a three-point scale (not at all true, somewhat true, and completely true). Low score on each item indicated low stress and high score indicated high stress. The average score was calculated for each subject, which indicates the job stress. This score was recorded as low job stress (indicated by the average score of 1.00 to 1.50), medium job stress (1.51 to 2.00), or high job stress (2.01 to 3.00). Table 1 indicates the percentage of NRHM workers having low, medium and high job stress.

**Table-1:** Stress Level

	Frequency	Percent
Hs	07	17.50
Ls	08	20.00
Ms	25	62.50
Total	40	100.00

It can be inferred from table 1 that 62.50 of NRHM workers have medium job stress. Further analysis on the factors that can be the potential sources of stress was made. These results are given in table-2.

Table 2 shows that workload acts as a major stressor for NRHM workers long work hours are associated with increased work-family conflict and at least indirectly, with psychological distress. Virginia Smith major (2001) found strong direct relationships between WIF and just two work variables-work overload and organizational expectations for time spent at work. Having too much to do on the job and/or experiencing pressure from a supervisor to work long hours creates such tension and stress that individuals are unable to accommodate all their responsibilities at home regardless of the number of hours they work.

This implies that the work must be properly planned and executed. A comparison of the actual work with the planned one will be helpful to take

**Table-2:** Factors that are Potential sources of Stress

Job Satisfaction	Stress level	Frequency	Percent
	Hs	08	20
	Ls	13	32.50
	Ms	19	47.50
	Total	40	100.00
Job Clarity		Frequency	Percent
	Hs	03	7.5
	Ls	25	62.50
	Ms	12	30
	Total	40	100.00

Working Condition		Frequency	Percent
	Hs	04	10
	Ls	20	50
	Ms	16	40
	Total	40	100.00
Workload		Frequency	Percent
	Hs	12	30
	Ls	05	12.50
	Ms	23	57.50
	Total	40	100.00
Job Security		Frequency	Percent
	Hs	6	15
	Ls	10	25
	Ms	24	60
	Total	40	100.00
Promotion		Frequency	Percent
	Hs	03	7.50
	Ls	21	52.50
	Ms	16	40
	Total	40	100.00
Interpersonal Relations		Frequency	Percent
	Hs	02	5.00
	Ls	29	72.50
	Ms	09	22.50
	Total	40	100.00

corrective action. Supervisors must be made to understand that human brain and body cannot work continuously. They need proper rest. Otherwise the outcome will be hazardous to the individual as well as the organization.

In contrast to the above finding, Carol A. Beatty concludes that successful professional and managerial women did not exhibit high levels of anxiety, depression and hostility nor did these outcomes increase for women in high-level executive position. Negative outcome measures were not higher for those with children, nor did work stress and work-family conflict produce more health consequences. Spousal support did not diminish or disappear as women climbed the career ladder, although lack of spousal support was associated with an increase in depression (Carol A. Beatty, 1996). Mrio Fulcheri *et al.*, (1995) also observed that size of workloads (long hours, work rhythms and deadlines), the complexity of tasks to be performed and the weight of responsibility carried are major stress factors. The reasons for frustration are delays in career development in comparison with expectations, a slow erosion of status and the methods and instruments used by company directors while dealing with managers. At the top levels of organizations, the principal stress factor is immediately identified as being authoritarianism. A large number of subjects in

managerial positions probably do not possess these requirements of flexibility and the capacity to adjust and are therefore “at risk” in terms of pathological responses to stress. Organizations must take care of the status and career development of its employees. Making the employees participate in the decision-making process will not only motivate them but also reduce their stress.

Apart from this, job satisfaction and job security have reasonable influence on job stress. 62.50% of the respondents feel that job clarity and interpersonal relations have only meager influence. It means that the tasks are well defined for the NRHM workers and they are well informed about the role they have to play. Manimala M.J. (1987) found frustration and boredom as the major types of stress for creative managers in non-creative organizations. In a creative organization, on the other hand, it is role ambiguity, role expectation conflict and interpersonal problems that will be the predominant stressors for the creative manager. The individuals must be clearly informed about the roles they have to play in their organization. A discussion among the conflicting persons along with a mediator will analyze and reduce the conflicts. Also the interpersonal relations are good in the industry. It can be observed that the NRHM department does not maintain any distance in hierarchy. Health workers in the department call their superiors by name and their workplace is informal to some extent. Phillip T. Potter *et al* (2002) concluded that the interpersonal stressors at workplace have an influence on the well-being. Results prove that psychosocial environment of the workplace has unique effects on well-being. Interpersonal conflicts experienced in the workplace also predict diseases, and well-being declines. In contrast, interpersonal stressors occurring outside the workplace were unrelated to physical symptoms at the within-person level. To overcome this, organizations must promote team spirit amongst the employees. The conflicts at workplace must be resolved then and there. Counseling will help for the betterment of the situation.

More than 50% of the respondents don't feel stressed by the working conditions and promotion opportunities. It can be inferred that Deptt. is providing better working environment. Promotions are based on talent and the deserving professionals are confident of getting promoted.

Parul Rishi (2002) in his paper writes that, since 1974, the member states of WHO have given increased attention to the question of psychosocial factors in relation to health and human development. However, those concerned with occupational stressors have so far paid little attention. One of the important reasons for this is that stress, to a large extent, is based on perception. There are certain characteristics of a working environment that some would perceive as stressful while others would not. Hence it is unrealistic to think that a working environment totally free of stressors could be created. People will always have to face them by using different coping strategies.

## **Conclusion**

Stress is inevitable in every individual's life. Similarly, everyone is prone to stress right from birth till death. An optimum amount of stress, called Eu-stress, will enhance performance of

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individuals. But long term exposure to stress will lead to negative consequences. A great deal of stress comes from the job or work. This stress at the workplace interferes with the family. It leads to work-family conflict. This stress must be taken care of. Otherwise, it results in lesser productivity, aggressive behavior in organization, absence from work etc. On the individual side, it affects the physical and mental health of the individuals. Understanding stress and identifying the coping mechanisms will help in the growth of individuals as well as the department.

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