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IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STRESS LEVELS OF EMPLOYEES IN CONTEMPORARY SCENARIO: A STUDY ON EMPLOYEES WHO ARE WORKING FROM HOME

(Software, Manufacturing, Private Banking Sectors)

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ABSTRACT

Many employees are facing stress while working from home in this Covid-19 pandemic situation. Working remotely has its benefits. No daily shuttle in the morning's. There is flexibility for you to work when you want to; also there is no strict formal dress code unless insisted by organization, mostly when you have online conferences. Same time working remotely also has its disadvantages like; It is very difficult for an employee who are working in organization to sit alone for such long time working, and hard to stay motivated. Employee doesn't work alongside their team and doesn't have colleagues to interact with. Employees are feeling stressful because of the factors like; they are being assigned with last minute targets, fear of losing productivity as they are spending more time in online meetings, additional cost for their technical equipment and their maintenance and mainly they are not aware of total working hours in a day after when started working from home, stress of employees may be reducing if their working timings are well defined by organizations in prior and also if they can reduce assigning last minute tasks.

Keywords: Covid-19, remotely working, stress levels, productivity, work life balance, technology

1. INTRODUCTION

Stress can contribute to the development of disquiet and unhappiness, and may cause an existing condition to worsen. As well as affecting your personal life and social life, stress can increase your risk of grievance, lethargy and tension. Abundant studies show that job stress is far and away the major source of stress for many adults and that it has spiralled progressively over the past few years. Increased levels of job stress in employees as gauged by the insight of having diminutive control but lots of demands have been confirmed to be connected with increased rates of heart attack, hypertension, and other disorders.

The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic is the major global health emergency of our time and the greatest encounter we have faced subsequently after World War Two. Since its advent in Asia in the year 2019, the virus has spread to every continent except Antarctica. Cases are increasing every day globally. But COVID-19 is more than a health crisis. By stressing each and every person of the countries it touches, it started devastating social, economic and political crises that will leave deep scars. Many of the world's greatest cities are desolate as people are staying indoors, either by choice or following government orders. Across the globe, many shops, multiplexes, hotels and resorts are closing. Every day, many employees are losing jobs and income which is their salary, with no idea of when normality will return. Generally island nations, heavily reliant on tourism, have unfilled hotels and empty beaches. Few agencies estimate that 195 million jobs could be lost.

In this scenario many employees are facing stress while working from home in this Covid 19 pandemic situation. Working remotely has its benefits. No daily shuttle in the morning's. There is flexibility for you to work when you want to; also there is no strict formal dress code unless insisted by organization, mostly when you have online conferences. But on the other hand it also has disadvantages. It is very difficult for an employee to sit alone for such long time working, and hard to stay motivated. Employee doesn't work alongside their team and doesn't have colleagues to interact with.

2. SCOPE OF STUDY AND LIMITATIONS

The Study concentrates on only on employees who started working from home of few sectors software, manufacturing, private banking who previously worked in office environment in standard timings as per their respective organizations. The scope of the study is limited to metropolitan, cosmopolitan, and urban cities of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states. The study involves the change in the stress levels of employees while working from home in covid 19 pandemic situations. Based on the questionnaire, all the information is extracted through an e-mail and personal interaction. The findings of the study may be beneficial to both organizations and employees in future.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Beehr, Terry A., and John E. Newman, in the research title - Job stress, employee health, and organizational effectiveness: A facet analysis, model | | (1978) stated that Job stress (and more generally, employee health) has been a relatively neglected area of research among industrial/organizational psychologists. The empirical research that has been done was reviewed within the context of six facets (i.e., environmental, personal, process, human consequences, organizational consequences, and time) of a seven facet conceptualization of the job stress-employee health research domain. They also concluded that some of the major problems of the research in the area are: confusion in the use of terminology regarding the elements of job stress, relatively weak methodology within specific studies, the lack of systematic approaches in the research, the lack of interdisciplinary approaches, and the lack of attention to many elements of the specific facets¹.

Satija S. & Khan W. in their research work titled —Emotional Intelligence as Predictor of Occupational Stress among Working Professionals| (2013). According to them Occupational Stress is as same as Job Stress that needs to be controlled at the workplace otherwise it will negatively affect on employee's work attitudes & behavior. This study investigates that, the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Occupational Stress. This study revealed findings that, Emotional Intelligence is a most significant predictor of Occupational Stress².

P.S. Swaminathan,& Rajkumar S. in their work on —Stress levels in Organizations and their Impact on Employees' Behaviour| (2013). They have conducted a study that focused on the levels of stress among the age group, profession, different varieties of jobs, hours of work and the influence of work environment on the degree of stress faced by employees. Stress in an employees' individual in nature. This study indicates that, an optimum level in which every individual can perform with his full

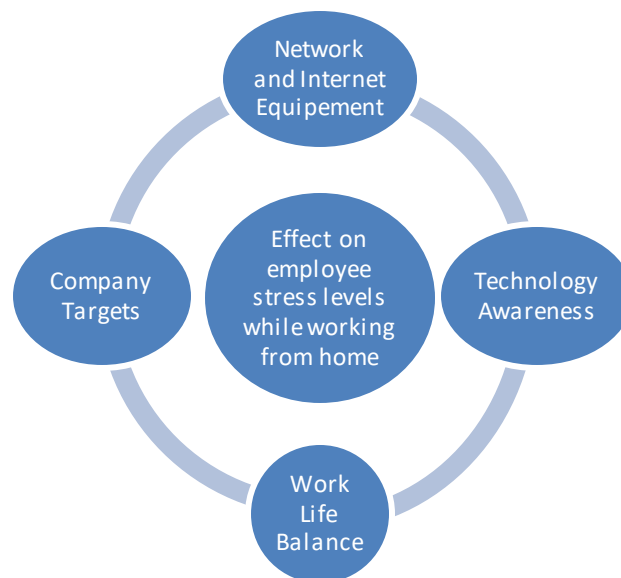
capacity and identified three conditions responsible for work stress they are 1) Role overload 2) Role self distance 3) Role stagnation³.

Kavitha in her research titled –Role of stress among women employees forming majority workforce at IT sector in Chennai and Coimbatore¹ (2012), she has focuses on the organizational role stress for the employees in the IT sector. She found in her research that, women face more stress than men in the organization and she viewed to be more specific married women faces more stress than the unmarried women⁴.

Hamidi, Yadollah, and Zahra Eivazi in the research title The Relationships Among Employees' Job Stress, Job Satisfaction, and the Organizational Performance of Hamadan Urban Health Centers² (2010), determine the levels of employees' job stress and job satisfaction in urban health centers in Hamadan, Iran, and the relationship of these levels to the organizational performance. Employees' stress levels were assessed using the Eliot Stress Questionnaire (Eliot, 1994), and job satisfaction levels were measured using the Robbins Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (Robbins, 1991). The performance of the centers was evaluated by using a series of outcome indicators. On average, the employees in all of the health centers reported a moderate level of stress⁵.

Schaufeli, Wilmar B., and Maria CW Peeters. In the research title Job stress and burnout among correctional officers: A literature review⁶ (2000) stated that their literature review presents an overview of occupational stress and burnout in correctional institutions, based on 43 investigations from 9 countries. First, the prevalence of various stress reactions among correctional officers (COs) is discussed: turnover and absenteeism rates, psychosomatic diseases, and levels of job dissatisfaction and burnout. Next, empirical evidence is summarized for the existence of 10 specific stressors in the CO's job. It appears that the most notable stressors for COs are role problems, work overload, demanding social contacts (with prisoners, colleagues, and supervisors), and poor social status. Finally, based on 21 articles, individual-oriented and organization-oriented approaches to reduce job stress and burnout among COs are discussed. It is concluded that particularly the latter (i.e., improving human resources management, professionalization of the CO's job, and improvement of the social work environment) seems to be a promising avenue for reducing job stress and burnout in correctional institutions⁶.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY:



5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study if there is any effect on stress levels of employees who started working from home in Covid-19 pandemic situation.
- To study what are the factors which are affecting the stress levels of employees.
- To analyse the satisfaction levels of employees who are working from home.
- To suggest improvements of stress levels of employees who started working from home.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study the data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary data was collected from various journals, websites and magazines for purpose of literature survey. The primary data was collected through personal interviews; this survey is done with a specific intention and on a specific subject, and observation. The information was collected during the period of March 2020 to June 2020. This study is conducted to know the opinions of the employees who have completed their post-graduation (MBA or PGDM) and Engineering (across various streams) to know their stress levels when there are working from home. The employees' responded for the survey is below the age of 35 years. The Questionnaires is distributed to 400 employees who are working in various sectors like software, manufacturing, private banking. A valid sample size of 320 is considered for the current study with a response rate of 80%. The sample type is convenient sampling and the questions are designed to know the satisfaction of the respondents with likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The data has been analysed and tabulated with necessary interpretation.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The study analyses the impact of covid 19 pandemic situations, change in employees stress levels when they started working from home. The data collected has been analysed and the finding of the study are discussed in the paper. It is found that 92.1% respondents' agreed that there is change in their stress levels.

Respondents towards change in stress levels while working from home (N= 320) (Table: 1)

Questionnaire for respondents to see change in stress levels after started working from home in COVID 19 pandemic situation.	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
Covid-19 pandemic situation showed effect on the stress levels of employee	0	25	0	168	127	4.24
Feeling stressful after started working from home	21	37	90	88	84	3.55
I know how to use electronic gadgets	0	32	32	128	128	4.10
Internet is not useful while working from home	29	131	102	37	21	2.66

Usage of internet, electricity, and electronic gadgets increased	37	57	3	192	31	3.38
Electronic gadgets durability is effected with continuous charging	28	41	35	157	59	3.56
Difficult to get access when employees are remotely located	2	60	36	124	98	3.80
Training interns and newly joined employees through video call is difficult	28	24	36	68	164	3.99
Video calls are making work from home easy	28	127	61	57	47	2.90
Acquainted with latest technologies(related to video calls)	26	132	58	104	0	2.75
Personal life is affected by working from home	35	63	93	129	0	2.99
Sometimes suddenly work is allotted while working from home.	2	3	7	60	248	4.72
Managing professional needs and personal needs	5	27	59	165	64	3.80
More productive work is gained by working from home compared to office environment	107	85	5	82	41	2.58
Interaction with colleagues has reduced during work from home	57	87	75	41	60	2.88
Organizations are changing targets so unable to meet the targets	1	88	34	74	123	3.72
Taking more time for productivity, took less time while working in office environment	6	58	28	91	137	3.92

Organizations are strictly following number of working hours per day	97	57	128	32	6	2.35
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SD= Strongly Disagree D = Disagree N = Neutral A = Agree SA = Strongly Agree

Table 1 represents respondents to see change in stress levels after started working from home in COVID 19 pandemic situation. From the above table it clear that most of the respondents feel stressful after started working from home, they are being assigned with sudden or instant works which are to be completed ($\mu = 4.72$), also these respondents feel that this covid 19 pandemic situation significantly showed effect on their stress levels ($\mu = 4.24$), many of the respondents say that they know how to use latest electronic gadgets ($\mu = 4.10$). Most of the respondents say that organizations are not following strict working hours when they are working from home ($\mu = 2.35$), also most of the respondents feel that productivity is depreciating with respective to time ($\mu = 2.58$), finally nearly half of the respondents feel that there is significant effect on them after started working from home.

8. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

From the above data, we can say that more than 92.1% respondents' agreed that there is change in their stress levels in Covid 19 pandemic situations, out of which nearly 54% of the respondents feel that they are facing stress after starting work from home. The main reason for the employees to feel the stress is that few organizations are assigning works instantly where most of the employees are not prepared to handle while they are working from home, because of various reasons like previously they are colleagues to help in clarification of doubts for the newly assigned talks, now they are finding it difficult is execution.

Respondents also feel that their gadgets durability is being affected as there are operating for more time; they started observing this during this pandemic covid 19. Though most of them know how to use the new gadgets above data is clearly saying that these gadgets and making video through these gadgets is not increasing productivity of an employee because they find it very difficult to handle few things through internet, like training interns, on-the-job trainings, off-the-job trainings and etc.

Same time most of the respondents agree that their personal life is not affected just because after they started work from home, respondents feel that more productive work is obtained when they worked in office environment. These are main factors observed from the above data why employee is feeling more stress. In addition to this, few organizations are not strictly following office hour's where they use to follow when employees are working from office environment. From the table 1 data, stress of employees may be reducing if their working timings are well defined by organizations in prior and also if they can reduce assigning last minute tasks.

9. CONCLUSION

From our study it is evident that nearly 54% of respondents feel that they are feeling stressful because of the factors like; they are being assigned with last minute targets, fear of losing productivity as they are spending more time in online meetings, additional cost for their technical equipment and their maintenance and mainly they are not aware of total working hours in a day after when started working from home, all these are piling up and creating a fear of losing a job in return which again making respondents or the responded employees stressful.

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