

ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

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ABSTRACT

Negative effects of organizational stress on employees' performance, which is directly linked to businesses' success, can be controlled with the determination of organizational stress's reasons. Thus, businesses can deal with organizational stress by applying some methods such as time management, social support, specifying aims activities, enrichment of the job, participatory management, clarifying the roles and avoiding conflicts, planning and managing the career, stress management education, improving physical working conditions and price management. In addition to avoiding organizational stress, supporting these efforts with individual stress management will also make stress be used positively beside removing its negative impacts.

Key Words: Organizational stress, stress, stress management, organizational behavior, management.

INTRODUCTION

After the appreciation of the importance of job and organizational stress, a number of research has been done that has resulted in common results. Especially from 1950's on, women have not been involved more in total labor market. Correspondingly, this has caused researchers to focus on some factors that create stress such as gender discrimination, unfair practices and mobbing. The purpose of this research is to discuss the concept of stress, which has become a common part of our daily lives, in an organizational sense and to briefly review the literature.

Definition and Importance of Organization

Obligation to meet social needs and solve social problems gathers people together by compelling people to collaborate with other individuals of society and, as a result, social units come into existence. All social units come into existence as a result of organization. Therefore, each social unit shows an organization characteristic. Organization is a social event and it has occurred since the beginning of societies (Başaran, 1984).

Organizations are a social fact and purpose as old as social life, which ensure people to achieve their goals that they cannot do alone and to succeed the ones

that they can do alone more efficiently and productively. People have been organized to protect themselves against nature and enemies and to get strong in the beginning of social life and they have established organizations in order to realize their financial, social and political aims throughout the history. Organizations meet people's various needs such as emotional, spiritual, cultural and economic needs (Baransel, 1993).

The Concept of Stress

The concept of stress comes from the word "estricia" in Latin and "estrece" in French, which involves the meanings to clutch, to tighten, to compress and to link. The word stress was used in the meaning of disaster, calamity, tribulation, trouble, sorrow, pain in 17th century. In 18th and 19th centuries, the meaning of the concept changed and it was used in the meaning of power and press against objects, individuals, organizations and spiritual structure. Accordingly, stress was started to be used in the meaning of the resistance against deterioration and distortion of objects and people by this kind of powers (Pehlivan, 2000).

Canadian scientist Hans Selye is accepted as the father of "biological stress" as known today (Dunhan, 2001). According to Selye (1974), stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change.

Sources of Stress

Stress is not a condition which occurs for no reason or unexpectedly. For stress to occur, people must be influenced by changes that occur in environment in which they are or live. Every individual is influenced by the changes in environment but some are influenced much more whereas other less. Stress is related to being effective of changes in environment or changes by people on people (Pehlivan, 2000). According to Aydın (2002), sources of stress includes three main topics as a result of humanity's adopting a sedentary life, accordingly, development of organizational structure and globalization. These are;

- Sources of Stress Related to Person (Individual)
- Sources of Stress Related to External (Physical) Environment
- Sources of Stress Related to Job (Organization) (Aydın, 2002).

Sources of Personal Stress

While some individuals can succeed at a certain level of stress, others may demonstrate decrease in performance at the same level of stress (Allen, 1983).

Sources of Environmental Stress

According to Taştan (2004), technologic uncertainties obviate employees' skills and experiences with the emerging of computers, robots and machines offering automation and thus create the sources of stress.

Sources of Organizational Stress

Sources of stress related to job in business may occur in various ways. Every business can create source of organizational stress according to its field of activity, its technology status, environmental conditions, physical conditions, members' position, experience and tendencies in organization, conflicts within organization, organizational structure, policies, processes, climate and other factors (Akmel,1992).

Organizational stress is described as personal reaction against characteristics of working environment that threaten individuals emotionally and physically (Jamal, 2005).

Sources of stress that affect employees of organization are workload more than enough, inadequacy of time, authorization and responsibility's not being proportional to each other, criteria's of supervision being obscure and objective, an unsafe politic condition, role uncertainty, role conflict, overloading, inconsistency between employees' values or with organization's values, employees' inability to harmonize with the job, worry caused by responsibilities, unsuitability of working conditions and alienation (Davis and Newstrom, 1988).

Indications of a problematic organizational culture can be sorted as low quality of work, low loyalty towards organization, employees with low capacity, high numbers of absences, labor turnover ratio, unhealthiness, alcoholism and stress (Fletcher and Jones, 1992).

Sources of stress related to work can be sorted as (Corlett and Richardson, 1981):

- Sources of stress related to role relations in organization
- Sources of stress caused by relationships in organizations
- Sources of stress related to career development
- Sources of stress related to organizational structure and climate
- Sources of stress out of organization
- Sources of stress personal

A number of studies have been done over organizational stress and its physical and psychologic effects on human health. Some of these studies can be chronologically sorted as below. Murphy researched the relationship among organizational stress, characteristics and health and he stated that organizational stress might result in job dissatisfaction, depression, physical and behavioral disorders (Murphy, 1995).

More workload than capacity and trying to overcome this with too much effort force employees in every aspect. This type of workload is named quantitative workload. In this type, employees overwork physically and mentally and they race against time. The other coercive condition is called qualitative workload and it occurs when employees consider themselves as being lack of necessary qualities to finish the work and perform what they must do (Greenberg and Baron, 2000).

PHYSICAL FACTORS OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT CAUSES STRESS

Working environment and physical conditions which employees are in are important factors that causes individuals to have stress. Abnormal temperature level in workplace, noise, dangerous and an unwanted job can increase the stress. Very crowded rooms or open areas can cause stress decreasing employees' concentration (Eren, 2000).

FACTORS RELATED TO QUALITIES AND ENVIRONMENT OF WORK

Stress is an important factor in work about which people think it is difficult to achieve or it depends on extreme difficulties. Some jobs normally cause less stress. Additionally, workplace conditions, job's being over person's acceptance boundary, insufficiently enlightened workplace and a dirty workplace. In addition to these general features, job also includes structural features and causes of stress related to organizational functioning (Erdoğan, 1996).

Workplace Violence and Psychologic Workplace Terror

Since the mid-1980s, violence in workplace has been dealt with as an organizational problem. Studies indicate that every year, 2 million employees are exposed to physical assault, 6 million to threat of physical assault, 16 million to some kinds of violence (Wagner and Hollenbeck, 1998).

OTHER FACTORS CAUSING STRESS

Organizational stress can sometimes be caused by factors outside the organization. Some of these are the factors such as environmental factors, modernization and alienation, global competition environment, life course of organization, distance of workplace and noisy environment. Another factor that causes stress is life stresses (Moorhead and Griffin, 2001).

ORGANIZATIONAL RESULTS OF STRESS

Stress that cannot be managed effectively has a cost. Beside the cost that is expressed numerically, there is also a cost that cannot be expressed numerically but causes losses and ineffectiveness in production. Stress is predicted to cause negative outcomes such as low performance at organizational level, employees' turnover ratio and discontinuity, alienation and increase in work accidents (Braham, 1998).

MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF STRESS

Reactions that individuals show to deal with stress are called “defense” or “overcoming” reactions. Dealing with stress is not escaping from stress but managing stress properly (Aslan, 2008). Dealing with stress is the cognitive and behavioral efforts of individuals to eliminate the necessities and difficulties of internal and external world when individuals surpass their boundaries, to control them and to reduce the stress. General definition of function of dealing with stress is to protect individuals from physical or psychologic results (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Different methods can be used in dealing with stress such as personal or organizational methods.

Personal Stress Management

Stress, whose effects are being felt much more now as a result of modern life and which affects people mentally and physically, has become one of the most important diseases of today. So, people strive so much and pay high prices to get rid of stress factors and control the factors causing stress. Generally, stress is a fact that people often face with in their lives. Facing with stress factors intensely harms people whereas little and infrequent stress make people do their jobs in a shorter time and more productively. Thus, people may develop reaction at a lower level against stress factors by learning being more careful of these factors (Şimşek and fr., 2008).

ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT

Changing the conditions causing stress or changing the reactions against them in order to deal with stress and increase the life quality is called “stress management” (Erdoğan, 1990).

As it was stated before, there can be a lot of factors causing stress in organizations. Some of these factors can be removed by precautions taken by managers. Managers will see that they can find some solutions to reducing stress when they learn more about organizational stress. Besides, informing employees about dealing with stress is also a solution that can be developed by organizations. Organizations can do this by applying a stress management program. Main steps in dealing with organizational stress can be sorted as changes with organizational structure, job design, regulations made in selection and placement programs, improving work conditions, education and improvement (Ivancevich et al., 1990).

Additionally, these can be emphasized as applications to avoid stress in workplace to redesigning job and task, role analysis, setting a goal, career development, sharing management, regulations of physical environment and activities towards increasing social support (Quick and Nelson, 1998). Problem solving stages below are suggested stages to decrease stress level when there is a problem in organization (Magnuson, 1990).

- Alternative solution should be evaluated.
- All information about problem in the past should be achieved.
- Application and results of solutions should be designed.
- The solution which gives the best result should be chosen.
- The decision should be applied timely.
- Results should be followed.
- The condition should be reevaluated if necessary.

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