**CASE STUDY**

On

**STRESS MANAGEMENT**

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**Dr. Shivanjali**

**Amity University Uttar Pradesh**

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**Priyansh Jain**

**A023119820019**

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

AMITY SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY

AMITY UNIVERSITY UTTAR PRADESH

NOIDA (U.P)

**ABSTRACT**

Stress is considered to be an integral part of one’s life; stress can be any kind of worry, anxiety, hassle, trauma, tension, pain or pressure. Stress is sometimes avoidable but sometimes it is unavoidable and one has to become aware of certain measures and ways about how to manage it in an appropriate manner. This is the case study manuscript that involves dealing with stress management; the main focus of this manuscript is to center upon work related stress, stress faced by small and medium enterprises, case studies of positive stress and negative stress; besides these it also highlights the sources, symptoms, types of stressors, and management of stress.

**Keywords:** Stress, Symptoms, Enterprises, Positive Stress, Negative Stress, Work Related Stress

**INTRODUCTION**

Stress is a fact of life, changes take place within one’s life and lead to stress, for example, going to school or a college, getting married, changing jobs or health problems are kinds of situations that involve stress. Sometimes situations that cause stress also prove to be beneficial, for example, when a person seeks admission in a college, that contributes towards his personality development, enhancement of knowledge, life and career prospects and well-being; on the other hand, pressure of work and studies, travelling to the college, if its located at a distance, living in a hostel also cause stress within an individual. Stress is unavoidable, situations and circumstances take place within the life of an individual that he cannot avoid stress, but he can cope up with a stressful situation if he learns effectively how to manage stress; he can control the detrimental effects of stress such as trauma and hypertension. In all kinds of professions such as medical, army, education etc. an individual faces stress, but an individual should possess the knowledge within him about how to interpret and react to the circumstances (Personal Development Track, n.d.).

**DEFINING STRESS**

Stress is the way human beings react physically and mentally to the changes that occur in their lives in the form of certain events, situations, incidents or experiences. People experience stress in different manners and for different reasons. The reaction of the person is based upon the perception of an event or a situation. The way the individual formulates his mindset, in that kind of manner he views stress, if he views the situation in a negative way, he will feel stressed, overwhelmed and out of control; on the other hand, if he views a situation in a positive manner, then it is called eustress, which is also known as good stress. For example, some people may find public speaking or airplane flights as very stressful which causes physical reactions such as increased heart rate and a loss of appetite; whereas some people may curiously look forward to an event, this means for some people these are negative stressors and for some these are positive stressors; depending upon the perception of an individual (Personal Development Track, n.d.).

**SOURCES OF STRESS**

Stresscan be experienced from four basic sources:(Stress & Stress Management, 2010).

**The Environment–** The environment around can inundate an individual withstrong, extreme, severe and competing demands to adjust with. Examples of environmental stressors include misdemeanors, crime, pollution, traffic, unsafe housing or residential areas, noise, crowding, weather and precarious groups of people.

**Social Stressors**– An individual experiences myriad stressors arising from the demand of social roles that he occupies such as a parent, spouse, caregiver and an employee; some of the examples of social stressors include job interviews, assignments, presentations, deadlines, financial problems, divorce or separation, breakup or loss of a loved one, incongruity, co-parenting, requirements for one’s time and attention and work load.

**Physiological**– Situations and circumstances affecting ones body, physically as well as mentally can be described as physiological stressors. Examples of these kinds of stressors include rapid growth of adolescence, menopause, obesity, insomnia, loss of appetite or eating disorders, lack of exercises and physical activities, poor diet and nutrition, health problems that arise due to aging, illness, giving birth, and accidents.

**Thoughts**– Individuals experience many situations in life that are stress provoking, but it is the thoughts of an individual that determine how he perceives it. It is the brain that perceives the situation as stressful, difficult, painful or pleasant; the way the individual formulates his thoughts and perceptions regarding the situation that way he determines whether they are negative or positive.

**TYPES OF STRESSORS**

Situations that are considered stress provoking are known as stressors. Stress is not always viewed negatively; it is simply the response of the person physically and mentally towards strenuous demands. There have been types of stressors which are classified below: (Stress & Stress Management, 2010).

**Positive Stress**– Getting admitted into an educational institution, getting promotion at work, starting a new job, marriage or commitment ceremony, buying a new home, having a child, transferring to a different location or outside the city or country, planning a vacation, holiday seasons, retiring, taking up educational classes or extracurricular activities or a new hobby; all these functions and experiences come under the category of positive stress. Positive stress motivates and energizes a person, is short term, is perceived within our coping abilities, makes a person feel lively and stimulating and enhances one’s performance.

**Negative Stress**– Torture, pain, sexual harassment, divorce, death, job insecurity, unemployment, sleep disorders, children’s problems, obesity or eating disorders, illness, health problems, loss of interest in extracurricular activities and hobbies, work pressure, aging, depression, experiencing a traumatic event, making presentations, travelling in traffic and crowded areas, conflicts and disputes and legal and financial matters come under the category of negative stress. Negative stressors cause anxiety or concern, can be for short or long term, individual in most cases finds unable to cope up with negative stressors, makes a person feels depressed and unpleasant, leads to decreased performance in all the activities undertaken and affects a person physically and mentally. In most cases he refrains from participating in worldly affairs.

**Internal Sources of Stress**– There have been few internal sources such as fears, fears of heights, flying, public speaking, or communicating with strangers and so forth. Having repetitive thought patterns such as delusions or hallucinations or upsetting thoughts. Feeling tensed about future events such as exam results, job restructuring or a medical test report and having impractical or perfectionist expectations such as willing to do such things which are not realistic.

**Habitual Behavior Patterns**– These are over working, over scheduling, failing to be assertive, feeling nervous on trivial issues, failing to set and maintain healthy boundaries and relationships, getting aggressive easily, procrastinating works and tasks. These are some of the habitual behavior patterns that cause stress or which can lead to stress.

**SYMPTOMS OF STRESS**

The symptoms of stress can be classified into four main areas which are physical symptoms, behaviors, moods and thoughts (Stress & Stress Management, 2010).

**Physical Symptoms**– The physical symptoms that an individual feels as a result of stress include sweaty palms, light headedness, muscle tension, increase in the heart rate, tension on the facial expressions and sometimes also ones hands begin to shake. These are the symptoms experienced within the physical body.

**Behavior**– There have been certain behavior patterns formed by an individual as a result of stress, such as aggressiveness, irritation, anger, sadness, misery, annoyance, frustration, impatience and worried. When individuals perceive stress as positive, they depict calm, composed and a peaceful behavioral trait.

**Moods**– As a result of stress, the moods of the person can be anxious, nervous, irritable and panicky. A stressful situation can be so intense that a person can become hysterical and extremely aggressive.

**Thoughts**- Delusions, hallucinations, depressive and upsetting thoughts, negative thinking, unconstructive viewpoints, overestimation of danger, underestimation of one’s abilities, capabilities and intelligence, underestimation of all the help, assistance and support available, worries and catastrophic thoughts are all kinds of thoughts that occupy the mindset of an individual in a stressful situation.

**WORK RELATED STRESS**

An individual undergoes stressful situations in all walks of life, but when an individual is engaged in work related activities whether it is one’s own business or he is employed in a company or he is self-employed. In all kinds of work-related activities, it is vital to undergo stress; therefore, the researcher has made work related stress the focus of this manuscript. Under work related stress, six categories of potential stressors have been identified: (Blaug, Kenyon, & Lekhi, 2007).

**Demands**– These include all the demands of work such as working hours, work duties, work load, physical environmental conditions such as lighting, temperature, heating and cooling facilities, sitting arrangement and facilities such as water, tea or coffee.

**Control**– How much say and autonomy a person has upon his job such as in decision making or giving suggestions to their bosses; the lower the autonomy, the more the work-related stress.

**Relationships**– Relationships and terms that a person develops with his superiors, subordinates and colleagues contribute in the measurement of ones stress level. Having good and positive relations will always stimulate and empower an individual in his job.

**Change**– Changes brought about in work can cause stress, if the workers have to cope with new work duties, hours or methodology of work, then certainly they will feel stressed out.

**Role**– Stress will trigger when an individual does not have a clear understanding of his role within an organization; when he develops a confused mindset and is not sure of his job duties or responsibilities then the individual will feel stressed.

**Support**– The amount of support and job training available to the person, as well as encouragement, sponsorship and the resources provided by the colleagues and management leads to stress.

**SYMPTOMS IN WORK-RELATED STRESS**

Individual Symptoms: (Blaug, Kenyon, & Lekhi, 2007).

1. Increased Blood Pressure
2. Sleep Disorder
3. Increased Alcohol or Caffeine intake
4. Increased irritability, aggressiveness and negative thinking
5. Back pains, tensions and headaches

Organizational Symptoms: (Blaug, Kenyon, & Lekhi, 2007).

1. Increase in absenteeism of the employees due to sickness
2. Long working hours
3. Increased staff turnover
4. Reduction in the performance of work duties and decrease in employee morale
5. Increase in hostility and having more disputations and conflicting situations

**MANAGEMENT OF STRESS**

Stress can be effectively managed and prevented by an individual; there are certain

steps and procedures that an individual should be aware of when learning to manage stress in an appropriate manner. (Personal Development Track, n.d.).

**Set Priorities**– An individual should set up an appropriate time schedule for all the tasks and have a routine to do all kinds of tasks. He has to decide what things are more important that need to be done and what are the things that carry lesser priority and can wait. When an individual will have appropriate time management and set up priorities amongst the tasks then that is one of the effective ways of managing stress.

**Practice Facing Stressful Moments**– It is vital to think about a situation that causes stress and practice how to effectively deal with it. If a person knows that speaking in front of the group or making a presentation causes stress then he should practice or do the rehearsal in advance with a trusted friend or a fellow student. If taking exams cause stress or a particular subject area causes stress then it is recommended that individuals should practice taking tests at home as well as focus thoroughly upon the subject area when there are no time pressures.

**Examine Your Expectations**– One should set up proper goals and objectives that he wants to achieve and have to make sure that expectations are rational; one should watch out for perfectionism and work hard towards achievement of goals and objectives. In order to manage stress, an individual has to develop positive thinking and be satisfied with what he has and what he wants to accomplish.

**Live a Healthy Lifestyle**– One should live a healthy lifestyle. Getting plenty of exercises, healthy eating, relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, prayer and breathing exercises; allowing time for vacations and breaks in between work, arrangement of schedules for hobbies, extracurricular activities, fun activities, recreation and leisure. One should always take pleasure and enjoy work as well as recreation activities.

**Learn to Accept Change as a Part of Life**– Changes and transformations do occur in life in all kinds of activities, family, job, education, career, location and so forth. All these changes do lead to stress, but an individual should understand that changes are crucial part of one’s life and should learn to accept them wholeheartedly, he should think of changes in a positive manner and not form negative opinions about them.

**Creating a Social Network**– Loneliness is an extreme and distressful state of mind and it can cause stress amongst individuals of all age groups, children, young adults, middle aged people and older persons. In order to curb the stress of loneliness, it is essential to create a social network and communicate with the people around. It is necessary to develop a support system of friends and relatives that one can talk to when it is required. For example, a working person who works five days a week from morning until evening, he has weekends to take out time for himself and over the weekend he socializes with friends, goes to the gymnasium and gets engaged into recreational activities.

**STRESS MANAGEMENT CASE STUDY FOR A COMPANY**

In this case, the Calibra Net Informatics Ltd has been considered; this company was established in 2004. Due to the innovative technological solutions, the company has been doing very well and despite of the economic crisis in 2009, its profit was continuing to increase. When the company has to enhance its performance, increase its productivity and goodwill, then it is obvious that the employees have to work hard and be motivated towards their work. The technical managing director in this company worked so hard that symptoms of stress and fatigue could be easily observed on her. Not only the technical managing director, but the other employees of the company also worked so hard that they started developing health problems and began taking a sick leave from work. Positive factors were that there was a strong correlation between the employees and absence of disputes and conflicting situations (Kirchner & Wolfling, n.d.).

The fact became clear that this company did not manage stress management, there was lot of pressure of work upon the technical managing director and it was not divided amongst all the other employees, the tasks were overlapping amongst the heads of departments; hence, stress and tension mainly arose due to indistinguishable capacity of tasks and duties. In order to effectively deal with these kinds of stressful situations, a workshop was conducted that emphasized and clearly disclosed the problems. Through a video analysis, the stress factors became visible and known to all the employees and employers and it is understood that all the problems and difficulties were arising from the inappropriate organizational structure. The company planned to organize another workshop to analyze the problems and find their solutions, stress management trainings were organized and then after half year outcomes were measured; the profitability began to increase again, number of sick leave days dropped back to half, work satisfaction questionnaire depicted good results, and in this way stress management proved to be flourishing and sustainable (Kirchner & Wolfling, n.d.).

**CASE STUDY: POSITIVE STRESS**

Stress is of two kinds, positive and negative; as it has been stated above it is up to the individual how he perceives stress, whether he looks upon stress as negative or positive. This is the case study of a university professor, who is under extensive pressure of work but she always looks upon stress as positive. Dr. Priya Bir, a middle-aged person is a professor in the Psychology department of Delhi University, besides teaching at the university she also conducts counseling sessions at home for individuals who face some or the other kinds of psychological problems such as anger, panic attack, hysteria, stress, depression and trauma. Dr. Bir often writes and gets her papers published, she attends conferences, national as well as international, she even travels abroad to make paper presentations; creates lesson plans, tests and does lot of research study. All these work duties make her even stay up in the night till 1 or 2 am; which shows that she does not even get much sleep. In addition to this she also has a family to look after, her spouse and her children.

It is obvious that extensive work duties do make a person feel stressed out, sometimes Dr. Bir even has to take lectures continuously without breaks; she incessantly speaks for five long hours, this does make her feel stressed but she has always looked upon stress to be a positive and an integral part of one’s life. She states that stress does occur but one should not think too much about it, one should get pleasure from one’s work duties and have benefit of them. Becoming aware about Dr. Bir, how she manages her work duties, even if she does not get her full-time sleep, she does not complain or feel tired, how she works hard and renders her best performance in all her work duties has greatly inspired the researcher. Finally, it can be stated and understood from this case that one should not feel stressed out from one’s work duties and job performances and always work hard to do ones most excellent. Doing one’s job well will always make a person feel happy, contented and pleased; he will not only make good money out of his job but also earn a good reputation and goodwill within the community.

**CASE STUDY: NEGATIVE STRESS**

Negative stress always proves to be detrimental and is worrisome for every individual; negative stress indulges a person into depression, trauma, causes upsetness, and leads to negativities. This is the case study of a domestic help, a ten-year-old girl named Jyoti who was employed in the house of a government employee, he lived with his wife, who was a homemaker and a three-year-old son. Jyoti was employed as a domestic help in a nuclear family. She was made to do all the housework such as cleaning, washing clothes, preparing meals, gardening, all kinds of works in the kitchen and was supposed to look after the child. The duo of husband and wife never treated this young girl with kindness and courtesy; they always mistreated her, abused her, even beat her if she does anything wrong and they never paid her monthly wage which was Rs. 2000 nor let her speak to her parents. She wanted to study, go to school, but they never got her admitted into a school nor even homeschooled her, in other words teach her some concepts such as alphabets or numbers in her free time. This young girl always had scratches on her arm and bruises on her face caused due to severe beating. She was even food and sleep deprived most of the time; she was made to wake up very early in the morning and went to bed late at night and was not given enough to eat, she was deprived of a healthy and nutritious diet. This showed that Jyoti was under severe negative stress and was experiencing extensive pain and torture.

One day a family friend, a woman with her husband visited their house, she was a social activist, who worked for the welfare of the economically backward sections of the society. She saw the injury marks on Jyoti’s arm and felt something fishy; she kept visiting their house a couple of times more to find out that something was wrong, Jyoti is not being treated well by her employers. One day, this social activist found that Jyoti was alone working in the garden, so she went and spoke to her and interrogated about how she was dealt with; Jyoti disclosed everything, how she came to their house and what kind of treatment she has been suffering at their hands. Becoming aware of all this, the social activist took severe action against the couple and rescued Jyoti, she even got her admitted into the school and called her parents, they were pleased to see their child going to school and studying. Jyoti then lived with her parents and continued to study. This case study reveals how a ten-year-old girl underwent severe negative stress and then she became fortunate to get independent and live a healthy and peaceful life.

**DISCUSSION**

Stress is fundamental to human existence, but the way the individuals develop their mindset towards stress matters the most. As a result of certain experiences, events and situations that take place in the life of an individual, an individual perceives stress. Understanding and perceiving a stressful situation depends upon the mindset of the individual. Stress is positive as well as negative. When an individual comes into contact with fortunate and good things such as getting admitted into a reputed university, or getting a job promotion he certainly feels stress as well as pleased and satisfied; this is stated to be positive stress. On the other hand, every individual undergoes some kind of negative experiences too, which can be major or minor, such as a health problem or a dispute with a friend, these situations can take a form of negative stress.

There have been certain sources of stress such as environment, social stressors, physiological and thoughts. When an individual experiences stress, he depicts stress in his moods, behaviors, thoughts and at times shows physical symptoms such as bodily aches, high blood pressure etc. There have been certain ways stated by which an individual can easily manage stress, these are setting priorities, practice facing stressful moments, examining one’s expectations, living a healthy lifestyle, learning to accept changes as a part of life and creating social networks. The researcher has put focus upon work related stress; how in an organization, when an individual is employed how he feels negative as well as positive stress. A case study has been stated of small and medium enterprises and the researcher has made the conception of positive and negative stress more logical by giving examples of case studies. How individuals feel positive as well as negative stress at their workplaces and how they manage and successfully overcome a stressful situation. Finally, it can be stated that individuals in all walks of life, whether self-employed, in service, in business, professionals, minority jobs, homemakers or students should develop within themselves aptitude and capabilities to think positive, control their anger, stay calm and work hard.

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