

IMPLICATIONS OF STRESS IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract:

Contemporary society lives in a brisk pace that is much faster than even a few decades ago, and people are forced to make an ongoing effort to adapt, which inevitably leads to stress. Time is, at the moment, one of the most important stress factors alongside many others such as: difficulties employees have in adapting to the changes required by their busy workplace and the dramatic decrease of work productivity.

Stress today is people's reaction to excessive pressures which they have to bear every day from the external environment. The way in which society evolves depends a great deal on the way each of us reacts and approaches the situations we face at our workplace and not only there. Despite all these particularly harmful influences, few people realize the danger of prolonged stress in order to take effective measures against it. This stems from the fact that stress acts slowly on the human body and its effects are not seen at once, but in time.

This paper aims to study the implications of stress at a workplace within an organization and what effects may occur. Based on quantitative and qualitative methods, this paper represents an exploratory research, especially by highlighting relevant information in the field.

Keywords: *stress, exhaustion, stress factors, adaptation, occupational stress.*

JEL classification: *I15*

1. Introduction

Contemporary society lives in a brisk pace much faster than even a few decades ago and people are forced to make an ongoing effort to adapt, which inevitably leads to stress. With all these particularly harmful influences, few people realize the danger of prolonged stress, even more take effective measures against it. This comes from the fact that the stress acts on the human body slowly and its effects are not seen at once, but in time.

Our study aims to highlight the stress level that employees live at work. For this we propose firstly to identify what stress is, which are its manifestations and its effects on employees.

Literature identifies the origins of stress research in the work of the Canadian doctor Hans Selye. He published in 1936 an article in which he launched the concept of general adaptation syndrome, which in 1956 he defined as stress. (Zlate M., p.571).

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work defines stress as an intense and unpleasant condition which on long-term basis has adverse health, performance and productivity effects. Also consider that stress is an individual reaction and result of interaction between environmental demands on the one hand and the resources, capabilities and possibilities of the individual on the other hand (https://osha.europa.eu/fop/romania/ro/topics/stres/definitions_and_causes.html).

At work, stress occurs as a result of inadequate mental resources, needed to deal with the demands and professional demands. (Bogathy Z, p.181)

The significance of stress can be achieved by defining the letters that make up the word, respectively (<http://www.thrgroup.ro/files/ManagementulStresului.pdf>):

- "S" (stands for strength) - "power struggle" physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually;
- "T" (stands for traffic control) - "fight to control your thinking";
- "R" (stands for re-design) - "Fight for remodeling";
- "E" (stands for erase) - "beyond time"; "Crisis"; "Get over"; "Get over the situation";
- "S" (is for sharing) - "share" with others welfare, knowledge, duties, etc.

Although for most of us stress has negative connotations, in fact there are two types of stress:

A. *positive stress (eustress)*. It acts as a boost, as a motivator. As the hours pass, under the influence of positive stress, we become ever more energetic to achieve optimum performance.

B. *negative stress (distress)*. It occurs due to external stresses and if not controlled can lead to serious physical and psychological disorders.

To control stress the important thing is to identify the causes of stress, and "stressors".

The main categories of stressors are:

- Own motivators. Refers to those internal forces that motivate people to ask more from themselves, sometimes to the detriment of health.
- pressures at work. We consider here the pressures on those who work in physically and mentally demanding domains.
- events in one's personal life. These events: death, divorce, debt may have a particularly high influence on people's lives.

For organizations it is also important to create a state of its employees. According to the World Health Organization, mental health is "a state of good" in which the individual (<https://osha.europa.eu/ro/publications/factsheets/102>):

- Is aware of its own skills;
- Can handle stress normal life;
- Can work productively;
- Can contribute to the community.

In several EU States, the rate of absenteeism, unemployment and long-term disability due to work stress and mental health problems are increasing. It is stated that depression will soon be the main cause of sick leave in Europe.

Experiencing stress can change the way you feel, think and behave a person. Symptoms include (https://osha.europa.eu/ro/topics/stress/index_html/definitions_and_cause):

In terms of organization:

- absenteeism;
- high turnover of staff;
- a faulty calendar;
- disciplinary problems;
- harassment;
- low productivity;
- accidents;
- errors and increased costs from compensation or medical care.

On a personal level:

- emotional reactions (irritability, anxiety, sleep disturbances, depression, hypochondria, alienation, burnout, problems in family relations);

- cognitive reactions (difficulty in concentration, memory, learning new things, decision making);
- behavioral reactions (abuse of drugs, alcohol and tobacco; destructive behavior);
- physiological reactions (dorsal problems, low immunity, gastric ulcer, heart problems, hypertension).

2. Research Methodology

The present paper is an exploratory research which took place in March 2015 and uses as research methods both the quantitative and the qualitative method. (Standardized questionnaire concerning "stress" Terry Looker, Olga Gregson) The evaluation was done by applying a questionnaire regarding stress, consisting of 25 questions, which describe both the activities of the daily life of an employee and the tasks he has to fulfill. Stress rating is made indicating whether the subjects have very high, high, moderate or low stress level depending on the score obtained.

The aim of the present research is to highlight the stress level in the workplace and how it affects the life and work of those investigated. In the present context the following hypothesis has been formed: we will assume that in the analyzed company there is a low level of stress, given the activity of the firm. The main research objective is to highlight the investigated subjects' stress levels and compare them in order to grasp the differences.

This paper demonstrates how stress affects all categories of people, and that stress is needed to succeed in adapting to the eternal changes in the environment and be ready for action in order to survive.

3. Data analysis and findings

Socio-economic characteristics of the subjects

The research had as subjects 14 employees of a real estate firm, aged 21-36 years, of both sexes, with computer operator jobs. Their seniority lasts between 1 and 10 years, some of them having higher education. Their main task is to update company databases, including telephone conversations with land owners.

Table no.1

Characteristics of investigated subjects

Category	Characteristi	No.	%
Sex	Men	2	14
	Women	12	86
	Total	14	100
Age	21	1	7
	24	4	29
	25	7	50
	34	1	7
	36	1	7
	Total	14	100
Studies	University	13	93
	High schools	1	7
	Total	14	100

Figure 1 shows that 14% of respondents are male, the other 86% are female.

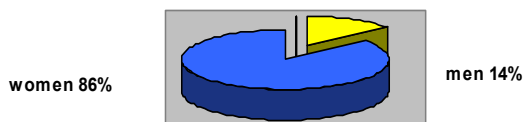


Figure no. 1. The percentage of subjects by gender

Taking into account demographic characteristics, subjects are divided into the following age groups: group 21 years- 7% of subjects, (one person), group of 24 years, 29% of subjects, (4 people), a group of 25, 50% of subjects, (7 people), a group of 34, 7% of subjects, (a person) and a group of 36, 7% of subjects (a person).

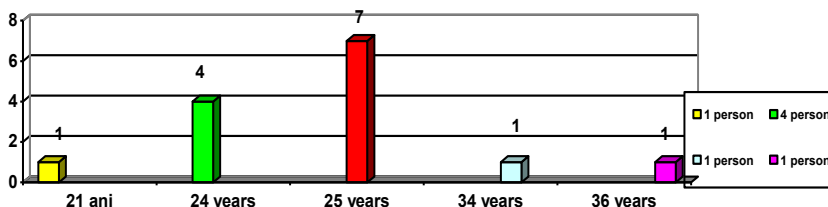


Figure no. 2. The percentage of subjects by age

Regarding education, important is that 93% of subjects had university education (13 persons) and 7% high school study (a person).

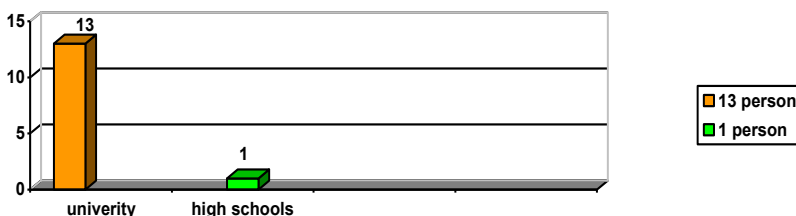


Figure no. 3. The percentage of subjects according to study

As shown in Figure 4, we observe that 8 investigated subjects obtained a score showing a high level of stress. This means that they exhibit specific signs of stress and are likely workaholics thus they can be included in a moderate behavioral typology, which do not handle stress very well.

A moderate level of stress was recorded by the other seven subjects. This means that they have some signs of stress. They are not workaholics, but show certain signs. They represent the A minor type of behavior and generally handle stress well enough.

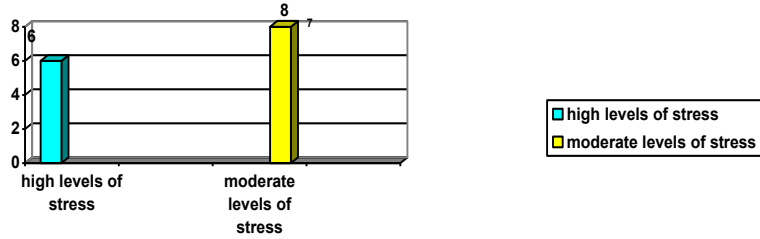


Figure no 4. Levels of stress obtained by the subjects

Individuals falling in the Type A behavior, have beliefs, attitudes and expectations, which engage them in a constant struggle to gain control over their environment. They lead a fierce struggle to achieve and maintain control, and when they feel that their supremacy is challenged or threatened, they react using a behavior known from type A. Individuals of type A can be described as agitated, zealous, rash, hostile and irritable. Most often they are not listeners, they are expeditiously overly competitive and ambitious.

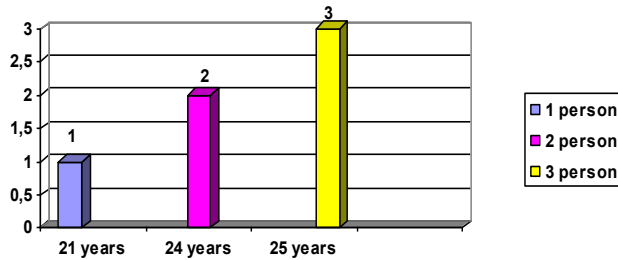


Figure no 5. Situation of subjects with high levels of stress

As shown in Figure 5 subjects with high levels of stress are a person aged 21 years, 2 persons aged 24 years and 3 persons aged 25 years. All subjects with high levels of stress are female, and only one person has medium studies. These subjects showing signs of stress more acutely than others, work becoming an obsession for them, and usually they do not handle very well stressful situations. All this being highlighted precisely by the answers they gave in the questionnaires.

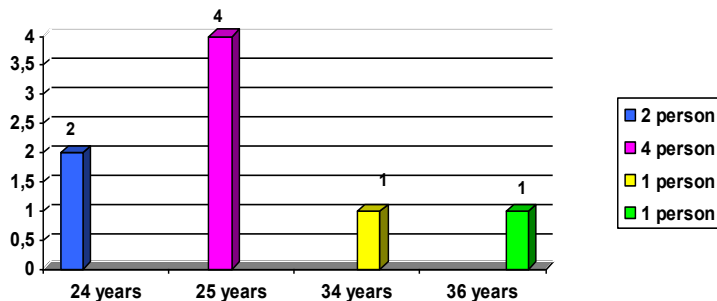


Figure no 6. Situation of subjects with moderate level of stress

As shown in Figure 6, two people, one female and one male aged 24 years, 4 people aged 25, females, 1 person aged 34 male, and 1 person aged 36, female are people who show some signs of stress but are not obsessed with work, in that they can work and in the same time define their personal lives. They are people who can cope quite well with stress.

Conclusions

Given the present we consider there is no standardized stress prevention program in the workplace. Programs and solutions that indicate methods to combat stress in the workplace must take in account the purpose, resources and organization size as well as the type of problems faced by the organization. However, stress makes its presence felt in all companies, starting from financial discomfort, to relationship problems, to accommodation between employees and the fulfillment of tasks.

As it emerges from the paper we observe that the hypothesis from which we started, through which we assumed that we will get a reduced stress in this organization was not confirmed. Of the 14 subjects interviewed, nearly half report high levels of stress, which causes them to have a number of behavioral manifestations such as impatience, restlessness, irritability and discontent, state of alert, competition, sometimes with themselves. These are people who think they are always right. The other 8 subjects had a moderate level of stress. We can say that although they have some characteristics of stress, they respond to requests from work, have more patience, more attention to detail, spend more time focusing on the project and work in a flexible and creative manner. Also, they have a higher level of concentration and are not distracted from the main activity. However, they do not have very good time management skills, failing to take advantage of it in a right way.

In conclusion, stress is a "disease" of our time, which affects people regardless of their lifestyle. It depends on us how we cope with the stressful activities from our every day life.

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