Time Management Technique to Mange Stress among Software Professionals

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ABSTRACT: India has a very vibrant corporate sector which is one of the major driving forces of its economic growth. Corporate sector has played a significant role in the economic development of the country. The corporate sector apart from creating the wealth for nation plays a significant role in the national economy by providing investment and employment opportunities. This is very positive side of the corporate sector. Due to these developments culture has changed food habits have transformed to a great extent. Working environment has undergone lot of charges. Working stress is also increasing day by day. These conditions are causing various health hazards in employees. A hazardous condition is one that impairs the proper function of the body or one of its parts. The environment in which software industries are operating today is continuously changing in term of organisational culture and climate due to increase in international business and foreign assignment. Recent articles and publications reveal that health hazards prevalence is very high in software industry. The study conducted by us also co insides with these findings. One of the major factor causing healthhazards is work place stress. Work stress leads to burnout in this industry. Their work nature is always time bounded and ambiguity Adequate knowledge about coping up strategies can be helpful in avoiding stress Proper time manangement techniques will help to avoid stress This paper deals with time management technique to avoid stress at workplace .

I. INTRODUCTION

India has a very vibrant corporate sector which is one of the major driving forces of its economic growth. Corporate sector has played a significant role in the economic development of the country [1]. The corporate sector apart from creating the wealth for nation plays a significant role in the national economy by providing investment and employment opportunities. This is very positive side of the corporate sector. Due to these developments culture has changed food habits have transformed to a great extent. Working environment has undergone lot of charges. Working stress is also increasing day by day. These conditions are causing various health hazards in employees. A hazardous condition is one that impairs the proper function of the body or one of its parts. The environment in which software industries are operating today is continuously changing in term of organisational culture and climate due to increase in international business and foreign assignment

II. STRESS

Stress is a state of discomfort experienced by an individual. Loss of emotional stability is the general expression of stress. It is generally apparent when the individual experiences a biological disorder. Stress has a positive association with the age, life styles, time constraints and the nature of occupation [6]. United States National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health has defined workplace stress as "the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress can lead to poor health and even injury." It simply means that workplace stress generally arises when there is a mismatch between the nature or magnitude of the job to be done and the employee desires and capabilities. Further, the definition also categorizes workplace stress into physical stress and psychological or emotional [2].

Six software professionals under the age of 33 have died and 2 top executives from renowned software companies have become paralyzed because of stress-related heart ailments in the last six months in Chennai, says a study by Mitran Foundation, a Bangalore-based voluntary association of practicing doctors. All the six who died, and the two who became invalid, had no family history of heart attacks or any pre-history of heart ailments or paralysis. They were all in

their prime, between 27 and 33 years, and handled challenging projects at work in their respective companies. They worked long and continuous hours. The end struck them very suddenly, and it looked as if their hearts refused to take any more stress [3].

The software industry has simply no routine. Deadlines hang before them and every day they chase new problems. During weekends more than 60 per cent of the vehicles are found parked in the office complexes. The stress for couples where both are employed in the IT industry is the worst [4,5]. The simple step of taking time off from work for three months allowed an IT couple wanting a child for years to conceive one.

Stress depression and hypertension have now become extremely common among software professional. Stress can lead to problems like sleeping disorder, anger, head ache, diabetes, fatigue and obesity. Industrial stress is important on account of distress caused not only to individual but to society as a whole.

III. EMPLOYEE STRESS

Increased irritation, Depression, Loss of interest in the job/ feeling of boredom in the job, Frequent fights with the colleagues, Withdrawal from social life, Increased number of mistakes in any work done, Frequent headaches, Disturbed sleeping and eating patterns, Aggravated health disorders such as - Asthma, ulcers, skin allergies and cardiac problems [7].

Physical Stressors

It has been found that poor working conditions at the workplace have resulted in physical stress among employees. The physical stressors include - poor lighting, improper ventilation, high level of humidity, unsuitable temperatures at workplace etc. Extensive usage of computer leads to various muscle related ailments in employees, especially those in the IT industry.

Psychological Stressors

Physical stressors impact an individual even psychologically. For instance, long working hours without the required breaks would make a person tired and demotivated and a sense of helplessness creeps in. This would lead to frustration and eventually, psychological stress. Psychological stressors include - unfriendly work environment, monotonous job, problems in the social/external environment, job insecurity, problems with colleagues or immediate superiors, lack of proper balance between work and home, external factors in the industry, unsuitable work culture in the organization etc [8].

Computers have became an epitome of modern life, being used in every aspect of life from calculating grocery bills, telecommunications, banking operations, name any sphere and one will find computer. With use of Internet technology distances carry little meaning and information anywhere in the world is accessible just with a click of mouse. Computer, a hallmark of technological advancement has ushered in a new genre of occupational health problem, i.e. of computer related health problems. India is one of the countries where the IT Industry is developing. A lot of job opportunities are available in this field and young generations are attracted by this field both for enjoyment and earnings [9].

India being the forerunner in the cyber world the occupational health personnel is slowly awakening to this group of modern occupational diseases, which are slowly taking its roots among the information technology (IT) professionals. These problems if ignored can prove debilitating and can cause crippling injuries forcing one to change one's profession. Society will have more individuals with health problem. definitely this will affect the growth of our nation.

Procrastination

Many of us like to postpone our works for a future date that never comes. Procrastinating people masters the art of doing nothing. That leads to more tasks in the line, more stress and low productivity [10]. The problem of procrastination affects a person's ability to function in a motivated sense and it interferes with the person's ability to complete assignments in a timely manner. Procrastination, no doubt meddles with productivity. Procrastinating people seldom perform well at a job. Usually, the problem of dilly dallying comes as the result of many years of laziness that thickens into a long-formed habit. Procrastinators are people who feel that they have not the guts to square up to the job right now and they reassign it to some vague moment in the future. They do not want to experience failure, so they put off the work until the last possible moment.

Procrastination and Stress:

When you procrastinate, it gives you some momentary relief at the cost of huge stress on your platter. Performing tasks and different assignment is stressful enough with having to worry about putting things off until the last possible minute.

Procrastination brings you lot of headache and tensions in a row, so if you've been procrastinating so long, put on the reality check. Procrastination mostly triggers a person's psychological make-up in which a person's mind allows them to think that it's alright to put off work [11].

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to analyse the causes for workplace stress and to suggest time management technique to avoid stress.

Methods and Discussion

A study was carried out among 300 Information Technology (IT) professionals in Chennai having minimum of five years experience to study the job related (computer related) health problems and role of ergonomic factors .

The study subjects were administered a pre designed structured questionnaire covering details like age, marital status, working hours, working environment, experiencing of any problem while working on computers and the type and kind of problems perceived [12].

Convenience sampling techniques were used to select the samples. The criteria to include the samples were the subjects should have at least five years of experience in the field. The samples were chosen from different IT companies in Chennai.

Table 1: Magnitude of Computer related problems by sex

SEX	n	Stress	
		Yes	%
MALE	177	78	44
FEMALE	123	48	39
TOTAL	300	126	42

Chi-square value df-1 Stress .7577 P > .05 statistically not significant

Table 2: Percentage of factors causing stress by sex.

Factors causing stress	Male (177)	Female (123)
Work Volume	26	18
Working hours	68	69
Insufficient breaks.	38	23
Food habits	45	52
Working time	65	72
Travel time	63	68
Nature of work	28	23
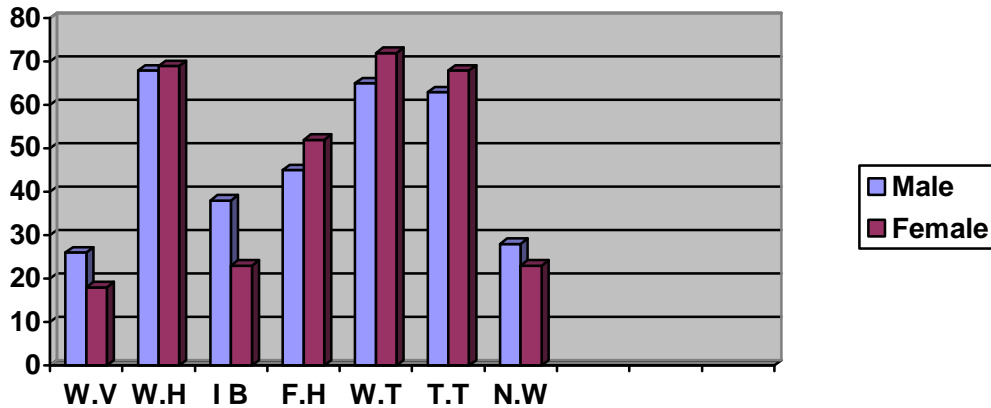
Table 3: Multiple regression of work stress to overall performance

Factor	R	R^2	β	ΔR^2
Organizational climate and staff development	0.216	0.047	-0.242	0.047[***]
Job responsibility and welfare	0.293	0.086	0.276	0.039[***]
Mental reaction	0.345	0.119	-0.212	0.033[***]

*** $P < .001$

IV. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

It is clear that proper time management is required among the employees to avoid stress. Work volume can be easily managed with proper time management. Working hours can be minimized by avoiding time wasters during the work.work can be divided into parts and delegate among the professionals to avoid stress [4].

Time Management vs. Stress

Stress is often a result of feeling out of control either at work or at home or both. It is well recognized that managing time effectively is one of the major factors in reducing stress. But, poor time management can cause to feel stress.

The following poor time management situations may cause us to feel stress.

- Too much work and not enough time in which to complete it.
- Delays, whether avoidable or not, which leave us feeling angry and frustrated.
- Rushing around trying to do everything at twice our normal rate of speed.
- Finding it difficult or impossible to relax on holidays.
- Becoming impatient with others when they are not quick enough at grasping things.

In fact older generation, from common man to king had time for recreation and lived a stress controlled life. But new generation have no time for relaxation. Due to many changes in the society and living pattern, people don't find time for each other and strained relationships are common nowadays [5].

Time wasters:

We have many time wasting habits in our day to day life. Timewasters differs from person to person. However, the common areas of Time Wasters are:

- Lack of ability to be disciplined in work
- Lack of ability to say 'NO'
- Lack of ability to be disciplined on the telephone
- Lack of ability to control and manage
- Lack of ability to communicate well
- Lack of ability to be disciplined at meetings
- Lack of ability to review systems and procedures.

In order to overcome procrastination we have to do the unpleasant, difficult tasks first. It may not turn out as fearsome as we imagined. If the job is not particularly important then either do it quickly or get rid of it. Always try to break up large tasks or projects in to smaller one that is manageable [8]. The fact to learn is we have to develop new habits to overcome procrastination. The results of this is that we move into higher levels of achievements, satisfaction and increased self belief and self esteem.

Four Pillars of Effective Time Management

	mon	tues	wed	thur	fri
am	1. check emails, post, initial response. 2. review last week reports 3. department meeting 4. agency meeting 5. check emails	1. check emails etc. 2. staff appraisal 1 3. staff matters arising time-slot 4. project time-slot 5. check emails	1. check emails. 2. chase figures for weekly report 3. strategy meeting 4. process review time-slot 5. check emails	1. check emails 2. my appraisal 3. staff appraisal 4. staff appraisal 5. check emails	1. check emails 2. weekly report 3. conference planning 4. unresolved non-urgent issues 5. phone calls 6. check emails
lunch	• with agency	• project team working lunch	• with customer	• with appraisee	• with boss
Pm	1. return phone calls 2. emergency situations time-slot 3. reading monthly reports 4. appraisals preparation 5. check emails and initial responses	1. supplier visit 1 2. supplier visit 2 3. major phone calls 4. check emails 5. thinking time-slot for new strategy project	1. customer visit 2. customer visit 3. my appraisal preparation 4. check emails 5. phone calls and correspondence	1. emergencies time-slot 2. systems and process review time-slot 3. weekly report preparation 4. check emails	1. agenda for next week dept meeting 2. plan next week's schedule 3. spare time-slot for staff issues 4. check emails 5. clear up outstanding issues

In order to have an effective Time Management we need to organize our week / month / year using the following four critical concepts.

1. Identifying Roles
2. Selecting Goals
3. Scheduling
4. Daily

Adapting

Time management task/activity schedule example

How to manage time and activities in the matrix

	urgent	not urgent
important	**1 - DO NOW** • emergencies, complaints and crisis issues • demands from superiors or customers • planned tasks or project work now due • meetings and appointments • reports and other submissions • staff issues or needs • problem resolution, fire-fighting, fixes Subject to confirming the importance and the urgency of these tasks, do these tasks now. Prioritise according to their relative urgency.	**2 - PLAN TO DO** • planning, preparation, scheduling • research, investigation, designing, testing • networking relationship building • thinking, creating, modelling, designing • systems and process development • anticipation and prevention • developing change, direction, strategy Critical to success: planning, strategic thinking, deciding direction and aims, etc. Plan time-slots and personal space for these tasks.
not important	**3 - REJECT AND EXPLAIN** • trivial requests from others • apparent emergencies • ad-hoc interruptions and distractions • misunderstandings appearing as complaints • pointless routines or activities • accumulated unresolved trivia • boss's whims or tantrums Scrutinise and probe demands. Help originators to re-assess. Wherever possible reject and avoid these tasks sensitively and immediately.	**4 - RESIST AND CEASE** • 'comfort' activities, computer games, net surfing, excessive cigarette breaks • chat, gossip, social communications • daydreaming, doodling, over-long breaks • reading nonsense or irrelevant material • unnecessary adjusting equipment etc. • embellishment and over-production Habitual 'comforters' not true tasks. Non-productive, de-motivational. Minimise or cease altogether. Plan to avoid them.

V. CONCLUSION

Effective time management skills will be of great help to find out how to utilize one's time and get a list of things done in a scheduled time frame. People who are able to accomplish all tasks on a list in the given time, they are known to have good time management techniques. So develop good time management skills so that hours are not wasted ahead of the feeling of failure. Weaker time management means more worry and more tasks are back. It could impact on jobs and fail to realize goals. Good time management skills start with a planner. It keeps heed of everyday activities. Stick to the golden rules of effective time management.

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