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Stress-Free Tech: An Ethical Approach to Managing Stress in the Digital Era

Gurdeep Singh

Research Scholar, Department of Philosophy, Punjabi University Patiala, Punjab, India

A B S T R A C T

This research paper explores the concept of stress and how to manage it in the digital era. Stress is a widespread occurrence in contemporary times. Every one or other individual experiences stress at workplace or any professional institution because of work pressures, or environmental issues. Due to which emotional, physical, and moral problems are occurred. Working conditions have gradually changed, and the modifications are currently ongoing. Because of these developments, the number of diseases has increased, morality and human elements have faded, and new problems arise daily, resulting in job stress known as the "illness of the century". It is a frustrating situation having a lot of work and congestion that reduces the concentration and normal working environment of employees. As per the findings of research on this topic, stress has a critical impact on professionals, affecting their productivity. As a measure to minimize stress, techniques for stress management include relaxation exercises, time management, cognitive interventions, and mindfulness-based approaches. Therefore, it is advised that professionals demonstrate self-control and a high sense of self-worth; participate in ongoing professional development aimed at improving organizational skills; integrate work within project constraints; delegate authority and accomplish tasks in manageable chunks; and be able to handle stress.

Keywords: Stress, Stress management, Morality, Organizational skills

1. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, individuals commonly experience significant stress in their lives due to the rapid changes occurring globally. These changes impact various aspects such as family dynamics, political landscapes, economic conditions, and societal norms.

The advent of the digital era has transformed the way of work in the modern business world. While technology has brought about more flexibility in the workplace, it has also introduced various challenges that cause stress in work life. Stress can manifest through factors like diminished work performance, decreased morale, health challenges, absenteeism, employee turnover, elevated medical costs, and workplace accidents, all of which impose substantial burdens on organizations. One of the most recent factors of stress is the overuse of technology in the workplace. Employees have to do work on digital technologies with minimal interaction with human beings which causes stress, depression and anxiety. Our contemporary society is defined by its swift pace of change and the diverse interactions within a globally interconnected community. People are confronting unprecedented challenges due to the increasing diversity and constant change prevalent in nearly every culture and organization. These challenges have the potential to breed uncertainty and stress at any given moment.

Mariam Sohail and Chaudhary Abdul Rehman in their study "Stress and Health at the Workplace-A Review of the Literature" highlights the work-related stress and its adverse effects on the physical and mental health of an employees. They provided detailed information about stress, its reasons and its impact on the health of employees. They conclude that there is strong relationship between stress at work and its physical and psychological effects. They discussed that stress management training should be provided to employees and all stress related theories should be applied.

1.1 MEANING OF STRESS:

Stress is a word that is commonly heard in every organization nowadays. It is a term that affects the normal functioning of our minds. Some authors define stress as:

'Stress', the term coined by **Hans Selye** (1907- 1982), is defined as a real or an interpreted threat to the physiological or psychological integrity of an individual that results in physiological and/or behavioural response' (Encyclopedia of stress). Stress is an internal state of the mind or body triggered by something real, symbolic, or imagined that is perceived as a threat to oneself or someone close; beyond one's ability to control; and associated with an increase in psycho-physiological responses, such as elevated blood pressure.

In the words of **Fred Luthans**, stress is defined as an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological, and/or behavioural deviations for organizational participants. **Ivancevich and Matteson** define stress as the interaction of the individual with the environment. It is an adaptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and/or psychological processes that are consequences of any external action, situation, or event that places special physical and psychological demands upon a person. When a person has needs, desires, wishes and expectations, and certain forces prevent the person from doing the desired activities, that situation is termed as stress. Stress and anxiety are not similar concepts.

Work stress is often defined as the excessive pressure that people face to perform in their organizations. It can be an outcome of both external factors as well as individual's own personality test. (Brar, G., & Singh, N. (2020).

1.2 Types of stress:

When it comes to stress, it's important to comprehend the difference between positive and negative stress.

Eu-stress: Positive stress, also known as "Eu-stress," is a type of stress that can motivate and inspire individuals to perform at their best. It is a good stress and for a short period. It creates a feeling of excitement. Individuals feel eustress when they feel happy at an extreme level due to some factors. When employees have to earn rewards, they have to put themselves into difficult tasks and challenging job duties which causes stress. Positive stress brings out hidden abilities and talents, improve performance, and create a sense of passion for work.

Distress: Negative stress, also known as "distress," can have harmful effects on the body and mind. It creates anxiety and mental and physical problems. It is an unpleasant feeling and may decrease the productivity of employees. Prolonged exposure to distress can lead health issues such as headaches, depression, anxiety, and even heart attacks.

Digital Workplace: In recent years, the term 'Digital Workplace' has become a rapidly emerging concept. It refers to those business organizations, that are using new and updated technology. Employees have to do work on these latest technologies. They are providing digital platforms that can operate from any device, at any time, and from any location in the world. Employees need to perform their work effectively and efficiently.

A digital workplace is a secure cloud-based platform that enables and empowers organization to empower and enable their workforce to be productive regardless of whether they work remotely, on site, or a combination of two. (Rafi, S., & Rafi, S. (2022).

Digital stress: Digital stress, also known as tech stress or internet stress, refers to the feeling of anxiety, frustration, or overwhelm caused by the excessive use of technology, particularly social media and digital devices. It is a new concept that has become more prevalent in recent years due to the increasing reliance on technology in our daily lives. While it has many rewards and benefits, it also comes with several stressors.

When it comes to digital stress, it's important to recognize that technology can be a double-edged sword. While it has brought many benefits and conveniences to our lives, it can also contribute to feelings of anxiety, overstimulation, and burnout. Digital stress can manifest in several ways, including constant notifications and alerts, the pressure to be constantly connected and responsive, and the fear of missing out on important information or opportunities.

Digital stress is described as the mental physical, and emotional strain caused by our constant exposure to digital technology and the pressures of the virtual world. It can manifest in different ways, including feeling overwhelmed by constant notifications, struggling to disconnect from work, and feeling pressure to maintain an online persona. Some ways to combat digital stress is to set boundaries and create a balance between our digital and physical lives. This can include setting specific times for checking email or social media, taking regular breaks from screens, and prioritizing face-to-face interactions with others. Additionally, practicing mindfulness and engaging in self-care activities, such as exercise and meditation, can also help to reduce digital stress and improve overall well-being. It's also important to remember that digital stress is not just an individual problem, but a societal one as well. By advocating for digital wellness policies in the workplace and promoting responsible technology use in our communities, we can work together to create a more balanced and healthier digital environment for everyone.

2. Causes of Digital Stress at Workplace

Digital Stress is increasing day by day due to overuse of technology at the workplace. It will impact negatively on the mental health of employees which hinders their performance. Several causes create stress while working in any organization:

- **Increasing expectations of employers:** With the advent of technology, employees work remotely and employers are expecting that employees should always be available for them and respond immediately, even after working hours. This leads to stress. Employees are unable to manage their work-life balance.

- **Abundance of Information:** Plenty of information available online can be overwhelming. Employees get exhausted and stressed while processing that information and refining important facts.

- **Multitasking:** Using digital tools one can do multiple tasks at the same time. Employers give multiple tasks to them which leads to stress and depression. Switching between different tools diverted the minds of employees which leads to decreases in their efficiency.

- **Lack of training and support:** Employees are not getting adequate training to handle digital portals and to operate digital devices and tools that may lead to stress and exhaustion.

- **Distractions:** There are some digital distractions also such as social media, and personal emails which may divert the mind from work or tasks. Hence, employees are unable to complete their work on time which leads to stress.

- **Flexible work challenges**: Flexible work arrangement offers are provided to the employees where they have a option of their own wok timing. Remote work offers flexibility to employees, but with this, employees have to be attentive all the time. They found being isolated and due to less interaction with others, their stress level increased. They are unable to manage their personal and professional life.

- **Less interaction with others**: With the overuse of technologies in the workplace, people have less communication with their colleagues. This is a human tendency that talking to someone relieves stress. However, due to less interaction, stress turns into burnout.

3. Stress Management:

In today's digital era of the business world, stress is a common factor. For the smooth functioning of the organization and for the good health of the employees, it is essential to manage stress. Stress is a complex situation and is influenced by many factors. There are several techniques to manage stress.

Stress is the excessive pressure that people face at workplace. Senior management should take extra initiatives to empathetically communicate with their employees and understand their concerns. Organization should also utilize the potential of technology to relieve stress and permit flexible workings. (Brar, G., & Singh, N. 2020).

(Masri, G., Al-Shargie, F., Tariq, U., Almughairbi, F., Babiloni, F., & Al-Nashash, H. 2023) explored stress measurement from physiological, psychological, and behavioral perspectives. They review the assessment methods and strategies for mitigating mental stress in the workplace and provides suggestions for early detection and mitigation of mental stress. They found Electroencephalography (EEG), Electrocardiography (ECG) and Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) to be the most used in assessing mental stress in the workplace. There are two approaches to managing stress. One is individual approaches and another is organizational approaches.

3.1 Individual approaches:

In individual approaches, employees are managing stress at their level. They learn some techniques such as problem-solving, managing time, complete their task within deadlines which helps in reducing stress. Besides this, to heal the stress some individual approaches are:

- Exercise Regularly

- Meditation

- Time Management

- Yoga Practice

- Relaxation techniques

- Sound sleep

- Facing the challenges instead of taking stress.

- Work-life Balance

3.3 Organizational Approaches:

Some measures can be taken by organizations also to combat stress. These are:

- Providing Job Security and stability

- Reducing long working hours

- Provides recreational activities

- Flexible working options

- Stress management workshops or camps

- Encourage communication.

- Create a fair work environment.

- Employee assistance programs.

4. Ethical Approach to Manage Stress

The advent of the digital era leads to the overuse of technology which results in stress, depression-like situations. An ethical approach to managing this stress is to identify the reasons of stress and implement strategies that prioritize the mental health and well-being of employees at the workplace. Some strategies for an ethical approach to managing stress are mentioned below:

Practicing self-awareness: Individuals should be aware of their thoughts and emotions. Whenever they feel stressed or exhausted, immediately take steps to cure the stress. They can do some relaxation exercises, deep breathing meditation, etc.

Set digital boundaries: Individuals have to set boundaries of digital use that prevent constant connectivity. This approach prevents burnout and maintains the mental health of individuals because everyone has a right to unplug and prioritize mental well-being.

Digital literacy: Digital literacy programs, proper training, and support to handle digital technologies, workshops on curing digital stress, and empowering users with knowledge and tools to navigate the digital landscape is also an ethical approach.

Seek support: Talking to someone is a human tendency to get relief from stress. Don't hesitate to talk to your colleagues, friends or seniors whenever you are feeling overwhelmed. Prioritize your mental health and well-being rather than work.

Conclusion: With the advent of technology, human beings are over-dependent on technology. In the modern business world, technology is being used at an alarming pace. Employees are using technology all day. Consistent connectivity is required while using digital technologies that create various health-related issues such as stress, depression, anxiety, frustration, and even heart attacks. Organizations have to organize some sessions to manage the stress level of employees such as employee wellness programs, workshops on how to manage stress, and also provide proper training and support to manage digital tools. Addressing stress in the digital era requires an ethical approach that acknowledges the impact of technology on the mental health and well-being of employees. It is essential to cure stress because with good mental health and well-being employees are more efficient and productive, which results in overall organizational success.

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