

Occupational stress and everything employees must know

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Occupational stress is defined as the perception of the difference between environmental needs (stressors) and the individual's ability to meet these needs (Topper, 2007). The occupational stressor is a collection of events or conditions that cause a stress response (Vermut and Steensma, 2005).

Causes of occupational stress

Work-related, personal, organizational and environmental factors can affect employee stress. The job itself includes responsibilities, responsibilities, heavy workload, and changes in workload, role ambiguity and role conflicts, which may bring pressure to employees (Robinson et al., 2003).

The work environment, such as a shortage of resources, problems with colleagues and poor management style, can be stressful. Organizational policies such as long working hours, insufficient training, unsafe work, insufficient salaries and poor career prospects can also be stressful. The socio-demographic predictors of occupational stress include gender and education level.

Consequences of occupational stress

Occupational stressors seriously threaten the health and well-being of employees. Occupational stress may cause physical, mental and social illnesses of workers. It is related to chronic fatigue. Eating disorders; increased blood pressure for headaches; increased risk of cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal pain (King et al., 2009).

Occupational stress may also cause psychological distress, such as mental exhaustion; emotional disturbances and sleep problems; lack of concentration; depression; anxiety; and suicidal thoughts.

Prevention of occupational stress

A combination of organizational change and stress management is often the most useful approach for preventing stress at work (Gutman & Nemeroff, 2011). Both organization and employees can employ strategies at organizational and individual levels.

At the individual level, most stress management approaches focus on the individual attempt to teach coping skills for management or reduction of stress. Stress management techniques include deep breathing exercises, exercise/physical activity, meditation and progressive relaxation exercise (Nelson & Cooper, 2005).

Time management:

Time management is the act or process of planning and consciously controlling the time spent on specific activities, especially to improve effectiveness, efficiency or productivity. A series of skills, tools and techniques for managing time can be used to assist time management when completing specific tasks, projects, and goals that meet the due dates. Generally, time management is necessary for any project development, because it determines the project completion time and scope.

Meditation

Meditation is a practice in which an individual trains the mind and induces a pattern of consciousness to achieve certain benefits, although it can be said that meditation is a goal in itself.

Relaxation technique

A relaxation technique (also known as relaxation training) is any method, process, procedure, or activity that helps a person to relax; to attain a state of increased calmness; or otherwise reduce levels of anxiety, stress or anger. Relaxation techniques are often employed as one element of a wider stress management program and can decrease muscle tension, lower the blood pressure and slow heart and breathing rates, among other health benefits.

Employee Assistance Program:

Another widely used strategy is the employee assistance programs, which offer a variety of assistance to employees. These include counselling employees who seek assistance on how to deal with alcohol and drug abuse, handling conflicts at the workplace, dealing with marital and other family problems.

Career Counselling:

Career Counselling helps the employee to obtain professional advice regarding a career that would help the individual to achieve personal goals. By becoming knowledgeable about the possible avenues for advancement, the employees who consider their careers to be important can reduce their stress levels by becoming more realistic about their options and can start preparing themselves for it.

Occupational stress is a real challenge for workers and their employing organizations. Various causes of stress have been identified which can be categorised into a job related, individual, organisational and environmental factors. Job-related causes include duties, responsibilities and heavy workload, whilst working environment such as resources shortage, problems with colleagues and poor management styles have been identified.

Organisational policies such as long work hours, inadequate training, job insecurity and inadequate salary, as well as socio-demographic factors such as gender; educational level; tenure; and race, have been indicated. It has also been noted that occupational stress threatens the health and well-being of employees in form of physical, mental and social illness for workers.

References

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