

# COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF FACTORS LEADING TO STRESS AND ITS IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO 5 STAR HOTELS IN KUMAON REGION

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*Kamlesh Harbola\**  
*Davesh Upadhyay\*\**

## ABSTRACT

It usually has an impact on one's mental as well as physical well being. Today, modern life is full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and demands. For many people, stress is so common that it has become a way of life. Sometimes, stress is not at all bad. It can help one perform under pressure and motivate him/her to do the best. But in certain cases when you are in emergency mode, your mind and body cannot take the stress and you usually have to pay the price.

Employee stress is a significant issue in the Hotel Industry, and it is costly for employers and employees alike. The employers need to understand the state of mind of the employees and accordingly distribute work. The industry is known for professionalism and dedicated employees, however, long working hours and almost no incentive puts a lot of pressure on the employees.

In this study it was observed that work stress leads to a lot of absenteeism and turnover. The employees are always on the move and have very little time to socialize. The different shift timings do not allow them to better their personal lives. Stress affects the quality of life of the employees (Dyck, 2001).

Through this paper we have made a conscious effort in highlighting the issues and the reasons which leads to stress among the employees. Also, we have give a few suggestions which if used can be fruitful for the organisation as well as the employees.

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\* Associate Professor, Amrapali Institute of Hotel Management, Shiksha Nagar, Lamachaur, Haldwani, Uttarakhand. Email- kamleshharbola@gmail.com

\*\* Lecturer, Amrapali Institute of Hotel Management, Shiksha Nagar, Lamachaur, Haldwani, Uttarakhand. Email- daveshh@gmail.com

The paper follows a primary and secondary research methodology where the data has been collected in the form of a questionnaire from employees across various five star hotels.

**Keywords:** Work, Stress, Hotel, Employees

### **Background of Research Problem**

In the recent past it has been observed that the tourism industry has risen sharply thus leading to increased competition among various hotels. In order to meet the rising demands of the guests the hotels are laying special emphasis on effective customer service. This has led to multitasking, long working hours and employment of part time workers. Therefore, various demands placed by organizations tend to pressurize employees, leading to stressful working environments.

Such stressful environments in turn affect the performance of the employees thus causing problems like conflicts, dissatisfaction etc. Many organizations have started focusing on stress management programmes but staff turnover still remains high due to job stress.

Therefore, this paper focuses on the factors leading to stress and its impact on employees and what techniques can be adopted in order to overcome stress.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To examine the prevalence of factors leading to job stress.
2. To uncover the different affected areas.
3. To arrive at possible solutions to overcome stress.

### **Research Methodology**

The research is based on primary as well as secondary data. As part of the primary data, questionnaires were filled by over 100 respondents working in 5 star hotels in various departments like Front Office, Housekeeping, Food and Beverage Service, Food Production, Engineering, Finance, Security etc. Out of the respondents 71% were middle and lower level employees and 29% were higher management employees. Only those employees were considered for the survey that has been in the organisation for at least a period of two years. The age group of the respondents was between 21 years to 40 years.

The secondary data consists of various published material from websites, research papers and articles and write ups from newspapers.

To check the extent of effectiveness that the factors of stress have on the employees and to know what are the major factors affecting stress we used "*Principal Component Analysis*".

## **Literature Review**

According to Hans Selye (1974), stress is a physiological reaction to certain threatening environment and is caused by events in the work environment. He asserted that stress is “the non-specific response of the body to any demand.” Lazarus (1993) believed that stress is the result of the worker’s perception that a particular environmental event is a challenge for him. Due to the nature of the duties, the hospitality industry is more vulnerable to stress (Faulkner & Patiar, 1997). Work stress leads to the problems like absenteeism, poor performance, accidents, errors, alcohol abuse, and drug abuse (Williams et al.2001).

More recently, the 2000 annual “Attitudes in the American Workplace VI” Gallup Poll sponsored by the Marlin Company found that 80% of workers feel stress on the job; nearly half say they need help in learning how to manage stress and 42% say their co-workers need such help.

The workplace has changed dramatically due to globalization of the economy, use of new information and communications technology, growing diversity in the workplace (e.g. more women, older and higher educated people, as well as increased migration, particularly between the EU Member States), and an increased mental workload (Kompier, 2002; Landsbergis, 2003; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2002 ).

It is not that the organizations are not doing anything to reduce the stress level, they are definitely working towards it but the question remains: how successful are those strategies? Therefore, through this paper we have tried to highlight factors leading to stress, their impact on employees and how stress can be overcome at work.

## **Limitations of the study**

Because of the busy schedule of the employees in the hotels we were only able to interview 100 respondents across various levels. This small number of employees may not represent the views of all the employees working in five star hotels.

## **FACTORS LEADING TO STRESS**

### **1. Long and odd working hours**

Working pattern in the hotel industry is 24\*7 which demands for excess of manpower for smooth operations. Since most of the hotels are cutting down on the operational cost they are either reducing the manpower or compelling the existing manpower to work for long hours. The last minute functions or emergency also causes an employee to work two or three hours extra which leads to tremendous stress. Banquet was one such section of Food and Beverage Service where maximum stress was visible.

## **2. Low Salaries and No Incentives**

Money is one of the major motivating factors for the employees. It has been observed that the employees in the hotel industry are paid comparatively low inspite of having more physical and mental load. Also it was observed that the employees who work for extra hour in their department are not offered overtime for the same. In few departments complementary off is promised but there is no guarantee whether it be will be given or not. This leads to de motivation and stress among them.

## **3. Lack of recreational activities**

It is noticed that few of the hotels conduct recreational activities time and again for their employees like birthday celebrations, departmental outings, annual hotel party and annual function but for most of the activities the employees have to pay themselves.

## **4. Irregular staff training**

Training and Development leads to better performance and employee satisfaction. In this fast moving competitive environment it is crucial for every employee to be updated with the latest knowledge of concepts and technology. However, it was observed that due to lack of time there are few organizations which are not focusing on employee development which causes unprofessional approach of employees towards the global clientele and job dissatisfaction among them.

## **5. Role Ambiguity**

During the course of the study it was observed that the employees in the various organizations were not clear about their job roles like the duties to be performed and what is expected from them. They rarely had any one to one interaction with the Head of the department.

## **6. Employee Relations**

Maintaining healthy employee relations in an organization is a pre-requisite for organizational success. Strong employee relations are required for high productivity and human satisfaction. But due to lack of transparency and employee feedback, excessive workload, last minute requirements and unending chaos misunderstandings are created and this takes a toll on the healthy relationship which is again a major cause of dissatisfaction among the employees.

## **7. Career Growth**

The lack of clear career structure is a well recognized cause of stress in any workforce. Various employees say that they reach ahead in their career at a very initial stage and later there is no scope of promotion because of which their career becomes stagnant. If you are not working in your area of specialization then you are less likely to find the job satisfying.

Every employee expects timely promotions and recognitions at his/her workplace. Therefore, each organisation should have clearly defined promotional policies and transparency in terms of appraisals and career growth. In most of the organizations it was observed that career planning was not done for the employees. If any changes were made then they were need based like job rotation or job transfer.

## **Impact and Reaction of Stress**

### **1. Dissatisfaction**

Stress is one of the major reason which leads to dissatisfaction. There are numerous other reasons why employees can become discouraged with their jobs and resign like lack of communication within the company, lack of recognition, or limited opportunity for growth but stress is the most important one. Management should actively seek to improve these factors if they hope to lower their turnover rate.

### **2. Lack of interest in work**

It was observed that one of the most prominent signs of being stressed at the workplace is losing interest in the work that you do. When you lose interest in your job every assignment seems to be tedious and the performance level goes down considerably. A person who is not interested in his job cannot deliver his best and hence is no longer a valuable employee for the organisation.

### **3. Absenteeism**

Workplace stress is the number one cause of staff absenteeism. Stress causes physiological as well as psychological problems. The link between employee absenteeism and rising stress levels is a worrying trend and seems to be affecting most of the organizations. Unmanageable workload, organisational change, pressure from manager secreates stress which ultimately results in absenteeism.

### **4. Conflict with company employees**

Stress causes conflict, and conflict causes stress. Many people attempt to reduce their job-induced stress without resolving the workplace conflict that causes it. But workplace conflict, given its relationship to stress, can be equally dangerous to people's physical and emotional health. It can even increase an individual's risk of injury.

As stress levels among workers increase, absenteeism rises and productivity suffers. Sometimes stress becomes so complex that it is difficult for the people to resolve their personal issues with their colleagues and counterparts.

## 5. Mood Disorder

During the research it was observed that the employees had varying mood disorders. They said that sometimes due to excessive stress they do not have a control on their emotions which results in mood variations and affects their job performance.

## 6. Alcohol/Drug Abuse

Due to lack of social life, sometimes a double shift and no weekly offs, creates mental as well as physical stress among the employees and to get relief from the above mentioned factors an employee resorts to alcohol and drug abuse which ultimately affects his/her health. It was observed that 30% of the employees give in to such activities.

## Findings of the test

Factors Causing Stress								
1	Long and odd working hours	.138		.158	-.111	.210	.859	-.122
2	Role Ambiguity	.834	.105			.163		.173
3	Low Salaries and No Incentives		.803	-.292	.315	-.172		
4	Employee Relations	.753	-.154		-.299	-.110	.331	.221
5	Irregular staff training	.709		.183	.417		-.198	
6	Lack of recreational activities	.649	.156	.290		-.280	.351	-.178
7	Career Growth	.493	.182	.411	.297	.584	.178	

### Component Matrix Test Result

In Component Matrix the values of the above stated factors is higher than 0.5. This shows that the above stated factors are significant in causing stress. Their rating as per the component matrix is as follows: Long and odd working hours > Role ambiguity > low salaries and no incentives. These are the highest rated as compared to other factors causing stress.

Impact and Reaction of Stress								
1	Conflict with company employees	.306		.173	.137	.259		.838
2	Alcohol/Drug Abuse		.272	-.200		-.129	.769	.332
3	Mood Disorder	-.187	-.101	.673		-.265	.281	.537
4	Lack of interest in work	-.140	.610		-.591	-.138		-.259
5	Dissatisfaction	.598	.586		-.232	-.216	.115	
6	Absenteeism		.110	-.158	.544	.160		.133

### Component Matrix Test Result

Through the component matrix it is observed that stress leads to “conflict with company employees”. It shows the highest numerical value as .838 in comparison to other impacts. The other factors which follow are alcohol and drug abuse and mood disorder. Stress also has a significant impact on these factors.

### Recommendations to reduce stress at workplace

Managers are trying to find new ways for managing employee morale and stress. Stress management programs at work place, conducted by various consultancies are quite popular these days but the question remains – are they really effective at curbing the problem?

Therefore, after doing the survey and questioning the employees we concluded with the following recommendations:

Recommendations								
1	Reduced Working Hours			.912		.137	-.152	
2	Clearly defined job description			.272	.798			-.102
3	Monetary Benefits		.790	.341		.249	.158	
4	Recreational activities	.306	.771			-.285	.151	.355
5	Improved interpersonal skills	.270		.700	.336		.157	
6	Consistent training			.556	.599			
7	Career development and growth	-.359		.269	.358	-.667	.131	-.299

*Component Matrix Test Result*

#### 1. Reduced Working Hours

By applying component matrix we concluded that the working hours should be reduced in the hotel industry as it can help in cutting down the stress. A lot of employees work more than 12 hours a day which becomes very tiring for them, mentally as well as physically. Therefore, it is recommended that the management should recruit sufficient manpower for smooth operations. Also, offs and duty roasters should be designed in such a manner that an employee is not required to do a double shift.

#### 2. Clearly defined job role

This is also one of the major factors which could be of great help in reducing stress among employees. Hence, it is recommended that before assigning duties and responsibilities to an employee his technical skills and efficiencies should be checked to ensure that right person is at

the right job. A lot of employees are not clear about their job role. It is imperative for the head of the department to assign various roles and responsibilities to the employee once he joins the organisation so that he/she may do the work diligently and to avoid any duplication of work.

### **3. Monetary Benefits**

In hotel industry the employees are not given monetary benefits if they work for an extra hour. After interviewing a lot of employees it was suggested that they should be given overtime for the extra hours because this works as a morale booster for most of the employees.

### **4. Recreational Activities**

Though there are several hotels that cater to employees needs by providing them employee recreational facilities but still most of the hotels are not practicing the same. Because of this the employees are losing out on social life. Recreational activities like family outings, departmental outings, and indoor games are some examples which can help in reducing stress and developing good understanding among the employees.

### **5. Improved Interpersonal Skills**

Employees should be given more time to spend with each other to develop better understanding and coordination amongst them. Mentor mentee programs should be given due importance.

### **6. Consistent Training**

Today, looking at the competitive environment it is essential that the employees are regularly trained so that they may enhance their skills and be up to date with the latest trends and technologies. Consistent training helps in improving the confidence level of the employee which ultimately results in satisfaction. A well satisfied employee will not be stressed because of work. Keeping this in mind the managers should focus on training.

### **7. Career Development and Growth**

In hotels the career path of an employee is not so well designed. Organisation should have clear and transparent promotional policies so that every employee is aware about their career growth. Internal promotions should be given priority instead of recruiting staff externally for senior positions.

## **CONCLUSION**

Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but can be worse if employees feel that they have little support from their managers and colleagues and they do not have control over their work. Work stress is a challenge for employees as well as employing organizations. Therefore, it is important that the work place is monitored regularly.

The work environment should be good, healthy work should be promoted and harmful aspects of work should be reduced which we have highlighted in our research.

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