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A theoretical approach: Knowledge management as intervention of stress

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Abstract

The last few decades have been an upsurge in the recognition of stress as a significant health problem. In day today life everyone faces some hassles. It includes recurring conflict, continuing pressures that seem uncontrollable or small irritations. Stress is a response to any situation where anyone finds challenges and threats. Everyone wants to get rid of this problem and tries to apply many techniques such as time management, coping strategies *et al.* As it is known that knowledge plays a vital role in our thinking and behavior. Therefore this paper tries to focus on knowledge management as intervention of stress. It is suggested that people should to manage their knowledge then they can reduce their stress level. Therefore researcher tries to give a view on knowledge management as an intervention.

Keywords: Knowledge management, stress, intervention

Introduction

Stress refers to the negative emotional state with associated behavioral, biochemical and physiological changes that are related to perceived acute or chronic challenges. It is a feeling of strain and pressure. Symptoms may include a sense of being overwhelmed, exhaustion, feeling of anxiety, irritability, insecurity, nervousness, social withdrawal, loss of appetite, panic attacks, high or low blood pressure, skin eruptions or rashes, insomnia, lack of sexual desire (sexual dysfunction), migraine, gastrointestinal difficulties (constipation or diarrhea), and for women, menstrual symptoms. It may also cause more serious conditions such as heart problems. Stress can lead to changes in behavior and physiology. There are three kinds of symptoms that can be seen in higher level of stress. (1) Physiological changes; stress has effect on at least four general physiological systems of the body, the sympathetic adrenomedullary system, pituitary adrenocortical system, neuropeptide system and immune system. Stress affects these pathways and may lead to illness among people. (2) Psychological changes can be emotional response, instability, irritability, mood swing and chronic worry etc. (3) Behavioral changes can be smoking, alcohol consumption and eating habits. Cohen and Williamson (1988) [9] found that people, who were under more stress reported getting less sleep, were less likely to eat breakfast and using more alcohol and recreational drugs than people under less stress. However, there is much variability in the link between stress and illness. Stress makes the individual more susceptible to physical illnesses like cold or flu. Friedman and Booth-kewley (1987) [13] studied that asthma, arthritis, ulcers, headaches and coronary heart disease found weak but consistent evidence of a relationship between these disorders and negative emotion. Stressful events, such as job changes, often result in insomnia, impaired sleeping, and health complaints.

Persistent or severe stress (trauma) can markedly alter a person's physical health. It is difficult to specify the exact biological processes underlying a person's response to traumatic situations. However, one model that helps explain the course of biological decomposition under stress is the general adaptation syndrome introduced by Selye in 1956. This explanatory view has been supported by the research (Cooper & Dewe, 2004). Selye found that the body's reaction to sustained and excessive stress typically occurs in three major phases: (1) an alarm reaction, in which the body's defensive forces are "called to arms" by activation of the autonomic nervous system; (2) a stage of resistance, in which biological adaptation is at the maximal level in terms of bodily resources used; and (3) exhaustion, in which bodily resources are depleted and the organism loses its ability to resist and at this point, further exposure to stress can lead to illness and death.

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The severity of stress is gauged by the degree to which it disrupts functioning. The actual degree of disruption that occurs or is threatened to occur depends partly on a stressor's characteristics: partly on a person's resources, both personal and situational, for meeting the demands resulting from the stress. Everyone faces a unique pattern of adjustive demands. This is because people perceive and interpret similar situation differently and also because, objectively, no two people are faced with exactly the same pattern of stressors. Many factors play an important role in predisposing a person to stress. Some of them are as following:

The nature of the stressor: Although most minor stressors, such as misplacing one's keys, may be dealt in due of course of time but stressors that involve important aspects of a person's life – such as the death of a loved ones, a divorce, a job loss, or a serious illness – tend to be highly stressful for a longer duration of time. Furthermore, the longer a stressor operates, the more severe its effects and prolonged exhaustion. Few stressors are considered chronic, or long lasting.

The experiences of crisis: The term crises are used to refer to times when a stressful situation approaches or exceeds the adaptive capacities of a person or group. Crises have a profound influence on a person subsequent adjustment. If a crisis leads people to develop an effective new method of coping – perhaps joining a support group or accepting help from friends. They may emerge from this crisis even better adjusted than before. However, if the crisis impairs the person's ability to cope with similar stressors in the future because of an expectation of failure his or her overall adjustment will suffer.

Life changes: It is important that life changes, even some positive ones such as winning a desired promotion or getting married, place new demands on us and thus may be stressful. Our psychological environments (including such things as friendship networks, work relationships, and social resources) can play a significant role in causing disorders or precipitating their onset, even in biological disorders such as bipolar disorder. The faster changes the greater stress. Early efforts on life changes focused on developing scales that could measure the relationship between stress and possible physical and mental disorders.

A person's perception of the stressor: Most of us are well aware that in some cases one person's stressor is another person's thrill. The different reactions that people have to environmental events are due in part to the way they perceive the situation. It is true that the same event will be interpreted differently by different people. A study by Clark *et al.* (1997) [8] found that persons who are prone to have panic attacks tend to interpret body sensations in a more catastrophic way than patients who do not experience panic attacks.

The individual's stress tolerance: The term stress tolerance refers to a person's ability to withstand stress without becoming seriously impaired. People who do not handle changing life circumstances well may be particularly vulnerable to the slightest frustration or pressure. People who are generally unsure of their adequacy and worth are much more likely to experience threat than those who feel generally confident and secure.

A lack of external resources and social support: Considerable evidence suggests that positive social and family relationship can moderate the effect of stress on a person (Ozer, *et al.* 2003) [24] conversely, the lack of external supports, either personal or material, can make a given stressor more potent weaken a person's capacity to cope with it. A nationwide survey of stressful life events in mainland China found problems with interpersonal relationships were the most commonly reported stressors in daily life (Zheng & Lin, 1994) [31].

Coping Strategies

If stress is a disturbance in homeostasis, coping is whatever people do to reestablish their homeostasis balance. Different factors can influence the severity of a stressor and influence coping as well. The process by which an individual attempts to manage stressful demands is called coping strategies. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) [17] defined coping at psychological level of analysis as "the process of managing (mastering, tolerating, or reducing) external or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." Coping has been viewed as initiating the mobilization of the efforts. The ultimate function of coping is to get relief from the pressure of the feeling of stress. Generally, people use two types of coping strategies; problem-solving coping and emotional focused coping (Folkman, Schaefer & Lazarus, 1980). Problem-solving coping involves attempts to do something constructive about the stressful conditions that are harming, threatening, or challenging an individual. Emotional focused coping involves efforts to regulate emotions experienced because of the stressful event. Sometime problem solving efforts and emotional regulation work together. Typically, people use both problem-focused and emotion focused coping in their stressful episodes suggesting that both types of coping are useful for most stressful events (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980) [12].

Knowledge Management as an Intervention

There are many techniques that have been used by people to reduce stress such as time management, lifestyle management, meditation, yoga, relaxation and so on. The knowledge management is the most prominent coping strategy, which can be used as an intervention. Knowledge management is also used as therapeutic technique to reduce stress level and sustain optimal level of stress, which is helpful to maintain homeostasis. According to Nonaka and Konno (1998) [20] knowledge management is defined as a method for simplifying and improving the process of sharing, distributing, creating, and understanding knowledge. Knowledge is considered as an asset which has to be valued, developed, and managed (Bogdanowicz & Bailey, 2002) [4]. Knowledge sharing is a process where the individual exchanges his/her knowledge and ideas through discussion to create new knowledge or ideas. Knowledge management and knowledge work require skills that anyone can learn. These skills and competencies provide enhanced efficiency, as well as supporting knowledge sharing. Competence in knowledge management skills also bring deeper understanding and appreciation of the value of knowledge sharing, and reducing higher level of stress. So it can be assumed that with the help of knowledge sharing people can remove their daily hassles and can reduce their stress as seen in day today life. Hislop (2002) [14] argued that the relationship between attitudes and

behaviors of workers to knowledge sharing and the workers who are willing to share their knowledge are a two way reciprocal process between attitudes and behavior of the relationship between the workers' willingness to engage in the knowledge sharing. This is a crucial process for an organization to get success. Recently many organizations are encouraging the knowledge sharing behavior among their employee in order to meet the organization's objectives and goals. There are some organizations which gain benefit after implementing knowledge sharing (O'Dell & Grayson, 1998) [22]. They found that companies such as Buckman Laboratories and Texas Instruments and a great saving in Dow Chemical and Chevron have huge gain of profit for knowledge sharing process. Cheng (2002) [6] stated that, knowledge sharing can help employees to new understanding their jobs and bring personal recognition within the department. Once the knowledge is built, companies will be able to have sustainable competitive advantage. When a persons are justified just because of their knowledge it creates a positive attitude towards life and reducing distress level, maintain optimal level of stress which is good for them.

Ways to Knowledge Management

Some important components of knowledge management are explore creativity, use of tacit knowledge, mange explicit knowledge, sharing thought and knowledge, and update knowledge. These all are important steps to reduce stress.

Explore Creativity: It is an initial step of knowledge management; people may explore their creativity to solve their problems. Creative people do not get easily frustrated when they are confronted with an emotional or physical hurdle. Stress is known to harm overall health, including cardiovascular, immune, and cognitive systems. "Creative people may see stressors more as challenges that they can work to overcome rather than as stressful obstacles they can't overcome," Turiano says. It suggests that practicing creative-thinking techniques could improve anyone's health by lowering stress and exercising the brain (Tori Rodriguez, 2012) [26]. With the help of hobbies people can explore their creativity. It is not only give them satisfaction but also an important factor for reducing higher level of stress.

Use Tacit Knowledge: Tacit knowledge is basically a problem solving behavior which is used in crisis. It can be difficult for people to explain how they apply their expertise to resolve new challenges. Knowledge which draws on the accumulated experiences and learning of the person and which is hard to reproduce or share with other is called tacit knowledge. Although tacit knowledge is hard to document, categories and share, organizations depend on it to ensure good-quality choices and judgments. In a work setting, many staff will have high levels of tacit knowledge which they have developed through their experiences, learning and ongoing investigation of sources. People may use their tacit knowledge in life style so that they can be easily well adjusted in critical situation of life.

Manage Explicit Knowledge: Explicit knowledge is knowledge that can be shared with others. It can be in the form of documentation, categorization, explanations, others as information etc. All motivational stories, books and magazines are form of explicit knowledge because these all can be stored, utilized and shared with others. So it can be used by people as a technique of stress management.

Share Thought and Knowledge: It is acknowledged that "knowledge increase with the sharing and shared pain will be decreasing" so sharing thought and knowledge will definitely reduce the level of stress. The goal of 'knowledge sharing' can either be to create new knowledge by differently combining existing knowledge or to become better at exploiting existing knowledge. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) [19] explained that knowledge could be considered as either tacit or explicit. Tacit knowledge can be said to be stickier than explicit knowledge. Hence it requires a stronger effort (more time and energy) to mobilize. Common identity often facilitates knowledge sharing since individuals within one specialist group understand each other better, than people from outside the group. In recent years the concept of communities of practice has become one of the most popular tools for enhancing knowledge sharing, even though no one actually knows how to practice, or cultivate, a community of practice. Apparently, a community makes it much easier to share knowledge, because people really care about their practice, are embedded in the same practice and, hence, talk the same (technical) language. So literally sharing thought and knowledge will help to reduce level of stress.

Update Knowledge: In the rapidly changing environment, fast growing technology and globalization of the world create high pressure on people to update themselves. If they do not update their knowledge then they can't handle the pressure. Sometime it leads to cause of stress, therefore people should be aware about the technology and update oneself time to time. It does make not only rich knowledge but also gives a way to live without stress.

Benefits of Knowledge Management

Scope for Emotional Ventilation: Blocked emotion creates mental and emotional suffocation, restlessness, fatigue, loss of energy and depression (Lawson, 2009) [16]. Emotion that is bottled up for prolong period creates emotional suffocation (Risipal, 2013) [23]. People may become intolerant of others and burst out unexpectedly on those people who care of a lot for him/her. It may happen just because of unexpressed emotions that generate emotional suffocation therefore it is needed to ventilate suffocation. Knowledge management can be helpful to ventilate blocked emotion. Ventilation of mental suffocation is necessary for the stress free and healthy living. It can be useful way for people to actively celebrate this new approach and to plan how to integrate it into life. According to hydraulic model of emotions for venting theory of emotional distress, if not expressed they will gets stored and can create pressure in the system. Therefore, venting emotions help in decreasing tension and consequential the negative psychological experience and symptoms. The greater the expression of negative emotions, the greater the relief should be (American Psychological Association, 2007) [1]. People can ventilate their emotion through sharing thought and knowledge with their family members, friends and colleagues. It will reduce the level of stress.

Scope for Receiving and giving New Facts: knowledge management is like a process of receiving and providing facts, information, and knowledge. Whenever people communicate, they give some facts and get some information that always becomes beneficial for releasing stress. Knowledge management may help people to draw a conclusion from the conversation. People can use their tacit

knowledge for receiving facts and can use their explicit knowledge for providing information to others.

Good for self-search: knowledge management is related to the cognitive aspect of personality. Therefore it is better way to self-search. Using knowledge management people can facilitate their decision-making power, consciousness, analysis ability, and representation of self. It is presumed that with the help of knowledge management people get the level of self-actualization.

Helpful in life style management: It will helpful in managing life style because People easily analyze the priority of life. When they set their priority then easily manage their life style. People can manage the entire thing which is essential in day to day life.

Economical Therapeutic Approach: It is very economical therapeutic approach because there is no need to any professionals. People may easily adopt these methods to communicate in day-to-day life and easily to communicate. People are not so much depending on other people. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is very economical method, which can be used as an intervention.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that knowledge management is not only essential for the organization but also have an importance in personal and social life. In business, world knowledge management is the most popular system to get rid of problems. Companies are hiring knowledge workers to improve their systems. As in the case of ICICI bank shows that Knowledge management at ICICI began on an experimental basis and carried on expanding and exploring, widening its ambit of operations. No additional funding was required and nobody was under compulsion to use the site. The relatively young age group of the employees and support provided by the top management had led to the progress of the concept of knowledge management. This system helps employees and reducing their job stress. If knowledge management is effective in organization then it definitely reduces stress and enhances one's wellbeing which contributes the progress of community as well as nation.

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