Employees' perspective of how stress effects performance

Matthew James Whitfield and Moira Cachia

UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON
School of Psychology, Social Work and Human Sciences

Introduction

Stress can be the cause of health issues (Sincero, 2012) and can influence the ability to be effective in the workplace. However if there is a good coping strategy in place, then negative stress can be avoided providing the person does not reach exhaustion stage (Selye, 1974). Stress is not necessarily a negative factor since it motivates us to act. As a result an optimal point of stress is required for optimal performance (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908).

Study Aims

This study aims to understand what employees find stressful, what employees do in stressful situations and identify the impact of stress.

Method

A qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews was carried out with 8 participants (5 female and 3 male) regarding their experiences about stress in the workplace. All interviewees had worked within the past 6 months. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and then analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Conclusion

In conclusions stress has the ability to impact health and mistakes made. However factors such as coping strategies and peer support had a positive influence on the reported stress levels. This shows that stress can be managed with the right team and coping strategy to allow for an increased performance.

References
Sincero, S. M. (2012). *Three Different Kinds of Stress*. Retrieved Feb 15, 2015 from Explorable.com: https://explorable.com/three-different-kinds-of-stress.
Yerkes, R. M. & Dodson, J. D. (1908). The relationship of strength of stimulus to rapidity of habit formation. *Journal of Comparative Neurology and Psychology, 18*, 459–482.
Selye, H. (1974). *Stress without Distress*. Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott

Results

The table below shows the factors effecting stress levels. Participants managed stress through the use of coping strategy and peer support. Participants who reported higher peer support had lower reported stress levels, made less mistakes at work and reported that they were less ill.

Category	Factor
Workplace relationships	**Peer support** - "On the first day everyone was really nice and really helpful, even the new people as well that came with me. The older people were just so nice. They were really helpful. If you're unsure, they'll teach you" (Irina)
	Workplace bullying - "Why would you do that? That seemed to have been a pattern and she did that often". (Pam)
	Psychological contract – "That really, really upset me. I just cancelled all of my overtime shifts from then on. I said, "If I don't have to come in, I won't go in." (Pam)
	Responsibility for people and inanimate objects - "because you end up taking time to explain more and how you want staff" (David)
Coping strategies	**Aggression** - "I say 'F... just get it done, NOW' – super aggressive" (David)
	Avoidance - "If I'm stressed because of them, I just go downstairs and just relax" (Harriet)
	Suppressing – "Probably very unhealthy, but just box it up. I'm one of the people who will plough on through. Regardless." (Steve)
Health issues	**Tiredness** – "If I had a stressful day at work, I won't be able to come home and study for instance because I'll have to take a break, go to bed" (Harriet)
	Illness – "I've noticed that my immune system was dipping because I usually have a really good immune system." (Pam)
Mistakes at work	**Mistakes through stress** – "Yes, especially when the customer jumped over the bar telling me 'you're doing this wrong, you're doing that wrong'. Telling me abusing stuff. It would make me messing things up, messing the till up. Mess pouring the pints and that would infuriate me even more." (John)