Stress as a Factor of Employee Absenteeism at Workplace in IT Sector, India

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Abstract

Concept Introduction - Employee absenteeism at the workplace is a significant issue in any organization as the participation of employees plays a dominant role in the growth of the organization be it in any field of work. Their truancy hampers the performance of an organization in various ways. A high degree of absenteeism could result in serious problems for any business the nature of which could be physiological, emotional, or even financial thus leading to reduced productivity, low team morale, and unsatisfactory monetary results. An adequate turnout of employees at work is extremely vital to allow the attainment of objectives and targets of any given department.

Objective- The purpose of this study is to investigate the significance of Stress as a salient factor that influences employee absenteeism at the Workplace in the IT Sector of India.

Research Methodology- The research was conducted through a survey questionnaire that helped examine the important stress-causing factors in an individual's work-life which eventually lead to the major issue of employee absenteeism in an organization. The sample was composed of 125 employees across various IT organizations pan India. Both, Qualitative as well as Quantitative methodology is used for this study.

Limitations: The conducted study is limited to a sample of 125 responses all of which belong to people employed in the IT sector of India. There are 4 major factors considered in this paper with regards to Employee Absenteeism while there are other factors like Travel Duration, Job Satisfaction, Non-cooperative bosses that have not been considered to the subject matter of this paper and are thus left out of the realm of this particular study. The method of survey questionnaire and interview has been used for collecting most of the data which might cause common method error.

Significance: The findings from this study have shed light on the major triggers of stress faced by an employee at the workplace and its direct relationship that leads to a significant drop in their performance levels contributing to high levels of absenteeism. This study could also significantly help HR at companies to understand the various causes of stress at the workplace and try to eliminate or tune it down to tolerable levels hence leading a significant reduction of employee participation or absenteeism due to stress.

Key words: Employee Absenteeism, Job Stress, Job Expectation Conflict, Co-worker support, Work-life Balance, IT Sector, India

Introduction

Stress and Employee Absenteeism

Stress at workplace refers to the detrimental physiological or emotional response of an employee when the individual is unable to cope up with the needs and demands of the job. It can often be triggered by various personal as well as professional reasons which could range from unexpected responsibilities that do not align with their capabilities to their social skills, or even family requirements. The common human tendency to cope up with such stress is to avoid work i.e., incapability to handle the workload resulting in withdrawal from socializing (cooperation within the team) which subsequently leads to a significant decrease in their productivity eventually reducing efficiency in the allotted work which often leads to a situation wherein the employee fails to follow the set of rules and policies laid by the organization and hence does not physically report to work. Such deviant workplace behaviour could, in turn, highlight the relationship between workplace stress and employee absenteeism.

Whilst in the ocean of workplace stress there could be a wide array of contrasting reasons leading to an employee being overworked and stressed, who then eventually resorts to the only option left that is to practice absenteeism. After narrowing and categorizing these factors down to 4 major reasons that could have led to a significant amount of contribution for the same as mentioned above.

Reasons for employees to remain absent from work due to stress:

A.   Job Stress

IT Sector is rife with various opportunities and challenges of keeping up with the recent technological trends in the world. Both IT staff and decision-makers are moved with work demands. It's sort of a chicken and egg scenario— decision-makers are using increasing workloads as an excuse not to authorize training, and the staff is struggling to complete assignments because of the dearth of appropriate skills. Either way, time that was formerly designated toward skills advancement is now being used to catch up on an increasing backlog of work. Workload concerns are dominant in today's times in comparison to the history of our IT. Incapability to finish the allotted project or assignment before the deadline cause stress within employees in order to perform better than their ability and hence cause increased reluctance to come to work. This constant pressure of meeting deadlines and being a part of a rat race is mentally frustrating and can lead to a serious burnout in employees where they might even go to the extent of constantly avoiding the work and responsibilities altogether.

B.   Role Expectation Conflict

The crucial reason why we stress out due to the role expectation conflict is that when there are contradictions between different roles that are expected from an employee by their managers or their clients, the employee is confused and lacks clarity eventually lashing it out on the employee who then has no other alternative but to take the brunt of it. In some cases, the conflict is a result of opposing obligations which results in a conflict of interest, in others, when an employee has roles that have different statuses, and it also occurs when an employee

disagrees about what the responsibilities for a particular role should be in professional realms. The lack of clarity that seeps u from overlapping job profiles and unexplained and unsaid commands together ends up being a huge mountain of misunderstanding leading to a lot of unnecessary stress and tension and which could be easily avoided if roles and management were clear about the same the very beginning.

C.   Co-worker Support

Employees in the organization are constantly working in a team for achieving the objective of the organization. Non-cooperation might exist among teammates because of age, gender, experience and personality, and other work values leading to a state of confusion and anger among teammates. This may cause disagreements among the teammates.

(Senel & Senel, 2012) identifies that lack of Team Bonding leads to the collapse of the company and makes the organization's performance suffer which results in the employee not be able to adapt to their team and feel the unwillingness to attend work. Eventually, it leads to a collapse of the team member who gets overloaded with additional work due to the absence of the stressed-out employee. This situation not only decreases employee efficiency but spreads the stress among other team members. While co-workers are not just colleges they also function as a support system for the employees and help them function effectively and efficiently, which helps them as a vent to their feelings and emotions reassuring them of some kind like a pillar of strength and understanding.

D.   Work-life Balance

The stress of short deadlines and high targets are mental torture for the employees as they are constantly facing the threat of losing their jobs. Repeated warnings and pressure built by the boss to complete the project successfully and well within the time allotted to the project often generates stress within the employees and they tend to work overtime or carry the work stress back home and do not get quality work-life balance which results in health issues due to excessive unbearable stress that further lead to health issues and employee absenteeism. The fact that employees are so worked up a with deadlines and meetings that they tend to miss out on other important parts of life which results in a loss of social life and interaction with their peers and social circle which is a leading factor of employee dissatisfaction as they don't have a system to relax and get back to the normal functional lives than they had before.

Literature Review

After innumerable studies and diverse researches, a direct correlation between stress at workplace and employee absenteeism has been established. The correlation was a combined endeavor of various individuals who have proved their mettle in the field and have provided quality insights into the same helping to shape the very foundational base of various research papers of this nature.

(Javed) in his study on Factors affecting Employee Absenteeism has verified that there is a positive relationship between employee absenteeism and components of inconveniences such

as health-related issues, stress, transport issue, and job satisfaction which formed the basic skeletal structure of his study.

Stress has time and again proved to be a major hindrance to a balanced work-life of an employee in any organization across the globe with evident economic consequences. As per the report published by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, USA in 1999, 26 to 40 percent of surveyed workers were found to be stressed due to their work which severely affected their efficiency and productivity. Leading to a decrease in satisfaction towards work life and an overall unprofessional attitude.

Many theories in this field also suggest that people who dislike their jobs will avoid them, permanently by quitting or temporarily by being absent or even coming in late. Such behaviour acts as a coping mechanism that helps them avoid the negative feelings that arise due to dissatisfaction at work and drops the productivity and efficiency of the employee at a constant yet significant rate

As per the research conducted by (Basariya, 2013) on workplace factors causing Employee Absenteeism in Indian Industries, stress caused due to the heavy pressure at work takes a toll on the employee's mental health, and in reaction to such stress, employees resort to excuses to avoid work.

Stress due to work is a pervasive and omnipresent factor which affects the future health and safety issue of the employee and the evidence from the paper by (Leontaridi, 2002) supports that stress is a serious noxious characteristic that impairs employee performance in a working environment through Absenteeism that further leads to Employee turnover and must be dealt with a very systematic and logical approach in comparison to any other labour market issue.

The study undertaken by (Sudha et al, 2019) was to analyze the various factors that influenced employee absenteeism. The analysis found out that workplace stress, enormous workload, lack of physical fitness, transportation issues, inadequate working conditions, unforeseen cause or sickness, lack of motivation, unhealthy employee-employer relationship and the attitude of the supervisor are extremely influencing factors that contribute to employee absenteeism which results in a decrease in the growth of the organization. These reasons not only rob the person of their zeal to work but also cripples their performance and reduce their talents to mere numbers and figures which then suffocates them further.

Stress is not only due to the work pressure that an individual has, but it can also be due to the culture of the organization.

In a study conducted on spinning mill employees in India; (Raman, 2017) says that occupational stress is created due to the policies and programs and it was suggested that the top management focuses on initiating a positive attitude among employees to minimize Absenteeism. Working condition is also proved to be of great influence to the level of absenteeism in textile factories as it is also a major factor which plays an important role in the health of an employee in many ways.

(Rahman T, 2016) talks about how routine health problem is one of the crucial reasons for frequent absenteeism among employees in a company. Therefore, healthy employees are relatively less absent from their place of work and thus can perform better with great concentration and focus.

A large-scale cross-sectional study conducted by (Seok et al, 2015) indicates that absence caused by illness was said to be correlated with an increase in job stress due to high job demand and insufficient job control.

A significant correlation exists between the two variables after adjusting the confounding variables. (Peeters & Jonge, 2004) emphasizes the importance of Work-Home interference in the work experience of health care workers and positions as a work stressor that can eventually cause exhaustion and mental satiation at the workplace.

(Sonnentag & Frese, 2003) define how stress and employee job satisfaction are related to each other. It has become obvious that the wellbeing of employees is negatively affected by organizational stress and each individual has a broad and individual range of ways to deal with stress to avoid having health issues and a great amount of deviance in their performance levels.

As per the findings of the research by (Elshout et al, 2013), the leadership styles of the best and worst-performing departments were a significant factor in employee satisfaction and absenteeism. The findings identified a transactional leadership style in the worst-performing department and a transformational leadership style by the manager of the best performing department. Further explaining the point that employee and employer relations are a key factor leading to job satisfaction and reduced stress.

(Sundaram et al, 2012) noted there is an impact of personal characteristics of police constables and job satisfaction on absenteeism rate as per the findings of the research work, there is a direct relationship between job satisfaction and employee absenteeism of police constables. The reason for which could be many intangible feelings like trust, responsibility, safety, etc to name some.

According to (Glynn, 2013), The Human Resource Department of an organization must look into finding a remedy for low Job satisfaction of employees at the workplace as increased Job Satisfaction can lower the Absenteeism which intern could increase the financial productivity and instill a sense of self-worth and productivity in the employees.

(Swarnalatha & Sureshkrishna, 2013) suggested that organizations need to understand the implications of satisfaction on the job as it might lead to Absenteeism, which in turn can become a costly problem to employers and must thereby assure that employee stress does not become a major factor that determines the dissatisfaction level of an employee at the workplace.

(Sundaram et al, 2012) reveal that there is a convincingly significant difference between job satisfaction factors like promotions, pay, etc. in comparison to satisfied and dissatisfied employees. For an organization to expect a higher contribution in assigned tasks or projects,

they must ensure that the employees have a high level of job satisfaction as it also reduces the rate of absenteeism by making efforts in the right direction and empowering the employees thus valuing them and their work.

(Iverson et al, 1998) established that there is a relationship of affectivity with stress and eventually with absenteeism but through their research, it is not examined that these relationships also hold in the context of burnout.

(Falkenburg & Schyns, 2007) findings are contradictory to various other researchers as they mention that highly satisfied employee may have a high rate of illegal absenteeism as these employees feel that their commitment and contribution has been on such a high level that it is okay for them to be absent because they have given so much to the organization. While they look for reasons to be delusional and escape the stress caused due to toxic work conditions they end up taking their jobs and positions for granted which in turn could harm the performance of the company,

(Adilah, 2014) describes stress as both personal and workplace stress and that both affect employee absenteeism. Several personal reasons may also be a reason for workers to experience higher rates of workplace absence like family responsibilities in general and working adults with young children that might be a stress factor especially in cases of excessive workload and having no other option but to be absent.

 As per the study by (Silpa & *Masthanamma*, 2015) on the various symptoms of Employee absenteeism, the top 3 ranks were for poor working conditions, boredom on the job and inadequate leadership whereas other symptoms like transportation problem, personal problems and stress in work were ranked at 8th, 9th and 14th positions respectively according to the data analysis conducted for their research paper.

(Spector & Goh, 2002) indicate that strains can affect emotion and have a link between the two for example if a person is highly dissatisfied with their job have a high chance of more emotional responsiveness to events that occur at work, i.e., small acts by a supervisor whom the employee does not like might elicit anger or annoyance in the employee. Moreover, even physical strains can affect emotions and eventually lead to burnout.

After examining the effects of family-related variables by (Nichols & Erickson, 2000) on absenteeism, the study tried to develop a relationship among the male and female gender but failed to find any such gender effects. There was no additive or interactive effects on being absent as a female. There was an equal effect on burnout as well as absenteeism on both genders of parents having children under 6 years of age and having difficulty with childcare. The descriptive analysis performed also highlighted that women performed more hours of housework and had more parental stress than men but women did not have higher absenteeism rates than men.

According to (Cohen & Golan, 2007), Job satisfaction plays a crucial role to decide whether or not an employee will remain absent from work. People who seem to be happier with their jobs tend to have the mental and physical ability to perform better at work and any

dissatisfied employee tends to rely on voluntary absenteeism. Therefore, Job satisfaction is the clearest and most consistent determinant of Employee absenteeism regardless of how the satisfaction level is measured.

(Yong, 2015) mentions the relationship of absence to organizational injustice, implying that the type of stress is not only directly related to one's job but also connected to various organizational aspects such as management system, resources, internal conflicts, and communicational issues among employees.

(Akgeyik, 2014) noted that employee absenteeism is a phenomenon that depends on various factors which could be social, economic, or even organizational. Thus, (Akgeyik, 2014) suggests that further studies must be conducted to evaluate other socio-economic variables such as cultural habits, personality, and wage rates to identify and describe factors that are possible predictors and contributing to absenteeism.

Few suggestions as per the respondents in the study done by (Chaubey & Verma, 2016) were to improve organizational work culture, working conditions, transport facility, employee welfare facilities, salaries, revised leave policies, and modification in supervisor's behaviour.

Research Methodology

The premise of the study explores the stress levels among employees of the IT Sector in India. Both, Quantitative as well as Qualitative methods were used for the research study. The Quantitative method began with the circulation of the questionnaire survey to employees in this sector from all over the country with a total of 125 responses. The results began to shape up proving as evidence towards the idea and material of the study. The findings of the study and data collected through the questionnaire were peculiar and related to IT industries in India. The questionnaire was based on a 5 point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The demographic questions covered the areas of age, gender, educational background, and years of experience in the industry. The next set of 25 questions was related to the major contributing factors being Job Stress, Role Expectation Conflict, Co-worker Support, Work-Life Balance, and Employee Absenteeism that were used by Shukla and Srivastava (2016). Hence, this research will be advantageous in explaining how stress is one of the root causes of employees' absenteeism in the IT Sector which can lead to long term detrimental results and irreversible losses emotionally as well as financially.

The pilot study conducted with 30 respondents resulted in a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.774 indicating reliability and a high level of internal consistency of the scale with this specific sample.

The primary and secondary sources of data and information were used to conduct this study. The primary data was collected through a survey questionnaire while the secondary data was gathered from textbooks, articles, and journals. The questionnaire was used to collect data to identify the brunt of stress at the workplace on absenteeism and the relation between these two was studied.

The primary interest variable i.e. the Dependent Variable is Employee Absenteeism and the Independent Variables that may contribute to Absenteeism is Job Stress, Role Expectation Conflict, Co-worker Support, and Work-Life Balance.

The hypothesis of the study is as follows:

- H1: There is a positive relationship between Job Stress and Employee Absenteeism.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between Role Expectation Conflict and Employee Absenteeism.
- H3: There is a positive relationship between Co-worker Support and Employee Absenteeism.
- H4: There is a positive relationship between Work-Life Balance and Employee Absenteeism.

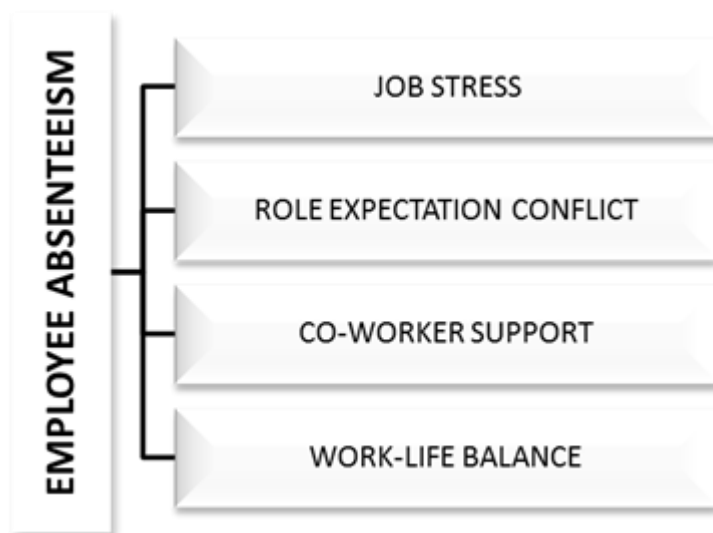**Dependent Variable**   **Independent Variable**

Fig 1: Research Framework

The Qualitative methodology consisted of a semi-structured interview that had a set of 10 questions that were asked to some of the respondents and an analysis of the same was done.

At!! start! of! the! interview,! the! following! statement! was! read! aloud! to! all!

participants:!"I!am!interested!in!the!experiences!and!views!of!university!employees!about!t he!

topic!of!work!stress.!Your!name!won't!be!recorded.!Participation!is!confidential!and!volunt ary,!

and! you! can! refuse! to! answer! any! questions! if! you! don't! feel! comfortable.! You! can! also!

withdraw!from!the!interview!at!any!time.!Is!it!alright!if!I!record!the!conversation!for!analy sis?"!

After! the! interview,! participants! were! informed! that! they! could! ask! any! questions! about! the!

study,!or!could!contact!the!interviewer!at!a!later!date!if!they!had!any!future!enquiries,!and! that!

their!data!would!be!kept!anonymously!and!destroyed!after!analysis.!

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study,!or!could!contact!the!interviewer!at!a!later!date!if!they!had!any!future!enquiries,!and! that!

their!data!would!be!kept!anonymously!and!destroyed!after!analysis.!

The following set of statements were mentioned to the participants before the start of the interview for their consent:

"Anonymity of your identity will be maintained, participation is voluntary and you can refrain from answering any question that you are not comfortable addressing, you can feel free to withdraw from the interview as per your will, would you permit me to record your data for analysis? you are free to contact the interviewer in case of any further queries, your data will be kept confidential and will be destroyed after the analysis."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section consists of the analysis and interpretation of the data collected in mathematical terms with the help of tables and figures. The data focuses on the impact of various factors that cause stress among the employees which thereby act as a catalyst to the hike in the rate of employee absenteeism and unproductivity in an organization.

The research aims to find a significant relationship between Job Stress, Role Expectation Conflict, Co-worker Support, and Work-Life Balance with Employee Absenteeism among IT professionals in India.

Table 1: Correlation Analysis

Correlations

		JobStress	RoleExpectationConflict	CoWorkerSupport	WorkLifeBalance	EmployeeAbsenteeism
JobStress	Pearson Correlation	1	.391	-.304	-.461	.356
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001	.000	.000
	N	125	125	125	125	125
RoleExpectation Conflict	Pearson Correlation	.391	1	-.243	-.396	.288
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.006	.000	.001
	N	125	125	125	125	125
CoWorkerSupport	Pearson Correlation	-.304	-.243	1	.191[*]	-.166
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.006		.033	.064
	N	125	125	125	125	125
WorkLifeBalance	Pearson Correlation	-.461	-.396	.191[*]	1	-.205[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.033		.022

	N	125	125	125	125	125
EmployeeAbsenteeism	Pearson Correlation	.356	.288	-.166	-.205[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.064	.022	
	N	125	125	125	125	125

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Pearson correlation - The correlation coefficient ranges from -1 to 1, where -1 or 1 signifies a perfect relationship.

Positive coefficients indicate that a direct relationship exists between the two variables: when one variable increases, the other increases.

Negative coefficients indicate that an inverse relationship exists between the two variables: when one variable increases, the other decreases.

The variables Job Stress and Role Expectation Conflict have a positive relationship with the Dependent variable Employee Absenteeism whereas Co-worker Support and Work-life Balance have an inverse relationship with Employee Absenteeism.

Sig. (2-tailed) - This tells us the p-value associated with the correlation and it indicates the error chances; it must hence be less than 0.05.

In the results, there are no significant chances of errors as the value is under 0.05 for all variables except co-worker support where there is a .06% chance of errors.

N - It refers to the number of cases that helped us obtain the correlation.

All the values are 125 which means there was no missing data set in the correlation analysis.

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.813	.700		2.588	.011
	JobStress	.252	.092	.276	2.754	.007
	RoleExpectationConflict	.146	.083	.169	1.767	.080
	CoWorkerSupport	-.047	.102	-.041	-.455	.650

| WorkLifeBalance | -.003 | .088 | -.003 | -.035 | .972 |

a. Dependent Variable: EmployeeAbsenteeism

Sig. - In coefficients, if Sig. is <0.05 then the variable is significant, and if >0.05 then it is insignificant.

Job Stress has sig. value of 0.007 and is therefore significant whereas Role Expectation Conflict 0.080, Co-worker Support .650, and Work-Life Balance .972 are insignificant.

t - If t value is >2 then the variable is significant, and if it is <2 then it is insignificant.

Job Stress has a t value of 2.754 and is therefore significant whereas Role Expectation Conflict 1.767, Co-worker Support -.455, and Work-Life Balance -.035 are insignificant.

To analyze the Qualitative data, the recorded conversations were listened to and the relevant responses or the key comments given were noted on a spreadsheet for each participant. This helped in comparison to each question for each participant and also provided as a source of easy reference to significant opinions or statements.

A set of 10 open-ended questions were asked to the participant, which have been mentioned below along with a compiled overview indicating the description of their responses it also covers the repetitive causes or factors that concern absenteeism as mentioned by the sample participants.

Questionnaire

Q1.How would you describe the term 'Work stress'? On the scale of 1-10 what would you rate your threshold of stress and why?

In response to this question, most employees described the causes or symptoms of stress at work.

The adjectives used by the employees when defining work stress were unpleasant, manageable overpowering, frightening, unbearable, partially chronic, and invokes nervousness.

Most of them described stress caused at work due to the feeling of job insecurity, excessive workload, being negatively affected by low productivity, not meeting targets, taking work worries home. A larger chunk of employees claim to have a high threshold for work-related stress but if went unaddressed for a long duration then it turned detrimental which further crippled their performance and efficiency. The average threshold from the answers of 53 employees on a 10 point scale is 7.5.

Q2. Have you experienced stress at work? If yes, do you remember your trigger for the same?

The responses to this question were answered as Yes by 91% of the sample as they had experienced stress at work at least once. Thirteen claimed to have been experiencing stress from work constantly. Most of them defined stress at work to be an inevitable part of life.

Four participants mentioned that they have seen evidence of stress among co-workers. One participant also stated, "Stress is a part and parcel of life, it's how you deal with it that matters". When asked about the trigger for stress, a mixed response was given ranging from productivity inconsistency, not getting an appraisal, salary cuts, the pressure to not meet company targets, strained senior-subordinate relations, and low performance invoked a feeling of anxiety and stress among the employees.

Q3.When dealing with work stress what is your basic outlook and response? Have you ever resorted to absenteeism as a measure to cope with stress at work?

When addressing the above question most of the employees admitted having a significant amount of work stress they also explained that how it, in turn, affected their personal lives and created havoc for those in it, as a coping mechanism the employees turned to their social circle or family for solace. While the terms and effects that the employees referred to in response to stress were anxiety, restlessness, fear of deadlines and workplace, arguments with spouse, frustration, the feeling of being left alone, reduced morale, under confidence, and a plethora of psychosomatic issues. When one of the respondents said, "Stress is inevitable at work and the only solution to effectively deal with it is to carry it with a positive and hopeful attitude thinking that it's only temporary and that this too shall pass". When asked if absenteeism is the best measure to cope with stress most of the employees claimed to be negative but were also guilty of participating in such an activity at least once in their professional lives.

Q4. In your opinion do you think that your job description is vague and could be misleading for an employee which eventually leads to discord and misunderstandings at work? Elaborate.

The typical response to this question varied in expression but all in all, conveyed the same meaning eventually leading them to dissatisfaction and loss of interest at work. On further inquiry, we realized that the employees stated that a vague or incorrect job description leads to an increase in expectation in the minds of the employees which when not met can lead to irritation, frustration, and loss of productivity also in the cases where job roles overlap there are conditions of misunderstanding between employees and loss of efficiency due to lack of the required skill set. One of the employees also stated that "Work in the IT sector is very dependent of team functioning and thus a vague job description often reduces the team's efficiency as it leads to a gap between the knowledge and application which in turn leads to a pressure to meet targets non-completion of which eventually leads to working stress and dissatisfaction."

Q5.Have you faced a situation where the inability to match your skillset to the current job expectations leads to a rift between your employer's expectations and your performance?

This question was answered as a yes by 97% of the freshers as they have faced by an issue where they had different guidelines or roles and responsibilities in their Job Description in comparison to what they were actually expected to do at work and have mostly lead to disagreements at work. They have been dissatisfied with their performance at work due to the

absence of clear instructions but have agreed to settle in over a while. As the employees come with a vibrant set of responsibilities and expect to grow in the organization but over the period of time the job roles get blurry and begin to overlap which leads to chaos and confusion the employee now has to enable new core skills to cope with the work and provide results, which is a task as that might not be his core strength. All this confusion reduces employee morals and demotivates them which is very stressful and might be suffocating for too leading to cases where he might want to shut out the work for a momentary relief leading to increased cases in absenteeism at work.

Q6. Could you describe an event where your uninformed absence from work caused an increase in your co-worker's workload and strained your relation with that colleague?

All participants who have taken uninformed leaves did at some point speak about strained colleague relations as they are always under time pressures to complete tasks and an unwanted extra pile of work added to another employee by the manager due to your absence often leads to disliking or reduced comfort with that employee who takes on the work. Four of the employees mentioned that it leads to persistent or continuous unrepairable damage in the co-worker relations whereas the rest believed that the issues settle with time and things get back to normal as they all eventually are a team. The employees further explained that an employee is already overworked with his share of issues and work and if an additional pile of work is added on his platter he might snap which will lead to unpleasantness between the two employees, the employees also stated that they were fine doing it once or twice but some employees make it a daily habit of bunking work and making excuses to get out of it, in the long run, such behavior will not only deteriorate the team performance but will also give birth to pent up frustration and anger

Q7. Can you recall an instance at work where you or any other colleague of yours has been functional to another colleague and helped them cope with work stress?

This question has two wide categories of answers wherein a certain set of participants said to have a strong colleague relation and mostly find it comfortable to speak to their colleagues regarding a stressful day or an unfinished task and have had been in cooperating teams, whereas on the other hand, a few employees talk about how employees in an organization work professionally and do not openly talk about stress or even if they do, they prefer not to dive deep in and help out by going out of their way or in the form on constructive feedback or help.

55% of the participants spoke about managers being concerned about their stress or a low day and usually ask an employee as it is said to be a part of their role as a manager to ensure a healthy and motivated team where no one has faced the brunt of excessive workload causing stress.

Q8. In your opinion how does an unhealthy work-life balance affect an employee's performance and consistency at work?

Due to unhealthy work-life balance, employees are usually extremely tired by the time they reach home and are unable to enjoy quality time with their families. They also claim to miss out on the necessary time required to do basic exercises for a healthier lifestyle and are often a victim to various health problems like Obesity, Blood pressure, and Cholesterol. Not only health issues an unhealthy work-life balance robs an individual of the joys of their social circle and which is an emotional vent for many employees this extremeness often pushes an employee on the borders of depression and mental health issues this reduced participation in their social life also obstructs their growth as an individual and hampers their life skills.

One of the participants stated that "After a long day at work I carry my work-related thoughts home and I'm mentally still tangled in the chaos that was created in the workspace that day I'm so preoccupied with it and I thereby missing on quality sleep and wake up grumpy and restless the next day which not only negatively affects me but also takes a toll on my family too."

Q9. Have you ever remained absent from work without prior information due to any personal reasons? Has it been functional in dealing with the issue or did it increase the stress from workload?

As far as absenteeism due to personal factors is concerned, most of the employees admitted to having taken leaves due to personal reasons but we saw a significant increase in the answers of employees with children or the ones staying with their extended families who agreed to have resorted to absenteeism at multiple occasions due to reasons ranging from health issues and the need to fulfill family responsibilities.

As explained by one of the participants, "IT industries have projects and a deadline with responsibilities assigned to each employee. Therefore, absence from work mostly results in either piled up work for the next day or the hindrance in the work of a colleague who is waiting to take the work done ahead after the completion of the work done on my end, for example testing a code developed which was developed by me for instance where my absence would naturally obstruct the flow of work and will lead to the failure for completion of the project in time".

Q10. What is your opinion on the factors that reduce employee absenteeism?

There were multiple suggestions made by the participants but most of these centered around improving employee relations and making the company functioning open and introduce a more human form of interaction for better understanding and invoking a sense of empathy and understanding to improve the quality of communication. There was a peculiar suggestion made by one of the employees that there are counseling sessions available in firms but not all employees are communicated and briefed about the help available at the company itself. Out of the total sample, about 11 employees also suggested that regular feedback is also taken about the employee's health, work performance and are also mentored to improve their work efficiency and hence improve their results. While they also supported the idea of distance working and flexible timings they tried to imply that if the company changes its ways of working and adopts a rather modern format of working than the traditional one they were

positive that doing so will affect employee productivity and their trust will significantly be increased as the stress factor will be reduced. All in all, the conclusion is that if the employee felt valued at an organization, he will give a better performance and will not resort to absenteeism as a coping mechanism.

Conclusion

The premise of the research paper reveals that the stress faced by an employee at work is a direct threat to the organization, its productivity, and the work environment. The end result proves that there is a definite and direct linkage between job stress and employee absenteeism. Evidence from the research indicates that Job stress is an inevitable factor that is associated with the increased chance of absenteeism among the IT sector professionals in India. Stress at work deteriorates the mental conditioning of employees and result in a loss of productivity or uninformed leaves as a measure to cope with the stress they feel at work. The paper eventually helps HR professionals in the IT sector to identify the major contributing factors that cause job stress among employees and help curb it down or at least get it under control in order to make it a healthy amount of workload for the employee as well as reducing and controlling the risk of financial losses to the organization due to uninformed leaves or employee absenteeism from work. It could also shine some light on the intervention programs related to the quality of the employees' work-life, in particular, managing of work absence and addressing unfavourable work-related psychological stress. This information will be of use for organizations to help understand the problem, causes, and remedies that revolve around employee absenteeism. Even though the problem can never be eradicated as it is a complex and dynamic issue with many causes, however understanding the problem can help to find sustainable solutions for organizations to address the issue.

Recommendation

Organizations must look to decrease job stress in order to lower absenteeism amongst employees. The Human Resource Department should look into why job stress levels are high and remedy the situation. The study also suggests that working conditions provided to the workers should be comfortable and should give a sense of relief to the worker to reduce the stress and unproductivity by allowing flexible hours and remote working which in return enhances productivity. It encourages companies to provide onsite or distance counseling as a way to help them deal with stress and prepare mentally for what all will come their way.

Future research on this topic can aim to study a larger sample with various other variable factors to increase the precision and validity of the findings. The magnificent topic is on the verge of expanding as human resource is the most valuable resource and looking after their mental health is one of the key roles for any organization to increase its capabilities. A similar study can also be used in other departments as well as the employees in other sectors or industries. There can be further studies conducted on what are the main reasons of job stress among the IT sector employees and to identify the most common factor that induces job stress. Age or years of experience of an employee in the company can also be taken as factors to study their relation towards work stress and IT Sector companies can take this

study forward by identifying ways and means to curb down work stress level among employees by conducting a survey on stress in their respective companies.

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