The Effect of Life Stress on Mental Health and Coping Response among Government Employee

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The modern world, which is said to be a world of achievements, is also a world of stress. One finds stress everywhere, whether it be within the family, business organization/enterprise or any other social or economic activity. Right from the time of birth till the last breath drawn, an individual is invariably exposed to various stressful situations. Thus, it is not surprising that interest in the issue has been rising with the advancement of the present century which has been called the 'Age of Anxiety and Stress'.

Stress is a subject which is hard to avoid. The term is discussed not only in our everyday conversations but has become enough of a public issue to attract widespread media attention whether it be radio, television, newspapers or magazines, the issue of stress figures everywhere, Different people have different views about it as stress can be experienced from a variety of sources. Ask the opinions of five different people and you are likely to get at least five different definitions. The businessperson views stress as frustration or emotional tension; the air traffic controller sees it as a problem of alertness and concentration; the biochemist thinks of it as a purely chemical event.

The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Hans Selye in 1936. It is a concept borrowed from the natural sciences. Derived from the Latin word 'Stringere', stress was popularly used in the seventeenth century to mean hardship, strain, adversity or affliction. It was used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to denote force, pressure, strain or strong effort with reference to an object or person. In engineering and physics, the term implies an external force or pressure exerted on something with the intention to distort and being resisted by the person or object on which it is exerted. In psycho-

physiology, stress refers to some stimulus resulting in a detectable strain that cannot be accommodated by the organism and which ultimately results in impaired health or behaviour. In common parlance, however, the terms 'stress' and 'strain' are used synonymously in a non-scientific manner. The popularity of this concept has dwindled in the physiological field where it was first introduced by the use of stress terminology continues to flourish in psychological and social sciences.

Well-being is a complex construct that concerns optimal experience and functioning. Current research on well-being has been derived from two general perspectives: the hedonic approach, which focuses on happiness and defines well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance; and the eudemonic approach, which focuses on meaning and self-realization and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning. These two views have given rise to different research foci and a body of knowledge that is in some areas divergent and in others complementary. New methodological developments concerning multilevel modelling and construct comparisons are also allowing researchers to formulate new questions for the field. This review considers research from both perspectives concerning the nature of well-being, its antecedents, and its stability across time and culture.

The fullest representations of humanity show people to be curious, vital, and self-motivated. At their best, they are agented and inspired, striving to learn; extend themselves; master new skills; and apply their talents responsibly. That most people show considerable effort, agency, and commitment in their lives appears, in fact, to be more normative than exceptional, suggestion some very positive and persistent features of human nature. Yet, it is also clear that the human spirit can be diminished or crushed and that individuals sometimes reject growth and responsibility. Regardless of social strata or cultural origin, examples of both children and adults who are apathetic, alienated, and irresponsible are abundant. Such non-optimal human functioning can be observed not only in our psychological clinics but also among the millions who,

for hours a day, sit passively before their televisions, stare blankly from the back of their classrooms, or wait listlessly for the weekend as they go about their jobs. The persistent, proactive, and positive tendencies of human nature are clearly not invariantly apparent.

Coping refers to efforts to master conditions that fax or exceed adaptive resources (Monar and Lazarus, 1977). As mentioned earlier, the term 'coping' has been used to denote the way of dealing with stress, or the effort to master conditions of harm, threat or challenge when a routine or automatic response is not readily available. Lazarus (1974b) has emphasized the key role of cognitive processes in coping activity and the importance of coping in determining the quality and intensity of emotional reactions to stress. We are constantly 'self-regulating' our emotional reactions, e.g., escaping or postponing unpleasant situations, actively changing threatening conditions, deceiving ourselves about the implications of certain facts, or simply learning to detach ourselves from unpleasant situations. He emphasized that

the individual is actively appraising the situation rather than the environmental contingencies manipulating the individual's behaviour. His definition focuses explicitly on efforts to manage the dynamic constellation of thoughts and acts that constitute the coping process.

Government employee plays an important role in development of society our society and country. They can, make the pillars of a nation deep and lift them high to the sky. But these lofty aspirations can come true only when they perform their duties with dedication and sincerity which is possible only when their personality is fully developed and they possess mental well being. Personality development and mental health are inseparably woven together. Good mental health of the government employee is necessary if there is to be good mental health in the working place. A government employee's personality, enthusiasm, knowledge, attitudes, and problems are all reflected in those peoples who are deal by him.

Objectives

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To study the main effects of Life Stress (High and Low) and Gender (Males and Females) on Mental Health and Coping Responses in Government Employee.

2. To study the interactive effects of Life Stress (High and Low) and Gender (Males and Females) on Mental Health and Coping Responses in Government Employee.

Hypotheses

The study intended to test the following null hypotheses:

1. Life Stress (High and Low) will have no significant main effect on Mental Health in Government Employee.

2. Life Stress (High and Low) will have no significant main effect on Coping Responses in Government Employee.

Sample

In order to satisfy the aims and objectives concerned and to test the aforesaid hypotheses, initially a random sample of 120 government employee was taken. The sample comprised of balanced number of male and female government employee (age range 30-45 years). These

government employees were appointed in various Government Departments of Rajasthan State on a permanent basis and they belonged to diverse disciplines.

Measures and Procedure

The following measures were administered on the Male and Female Government Employee with informed consent and they were duly assured that the results so obtained would be kept confidential and would not be used for any other purpose extraneous to the present research:

1. PGI General Mental Health Scale (Verma, S.K. & Verma, A, 1989)

2. Ways of Coping Scale (Folkman & Lazarus, R.S., 1986)

3. Presumptive Stressful Life Events Scale (Singh et.al. 1981)

Research Design

The Research Design for the proposed study was a 2 x 2 factorial one. The following variables were used:

Variables:

Independent Variables

1. Life Stress (High and Low)

2. Gender (Males and Females)

Dependent Variables

1. Mental Health
2. Coping Responses

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive Group Statistics (Means and Standard Deviations) of these two factors viz. Life Stress (High and Low) and Gender (Males and Females) with their respective levels were calculated through SPSS 10 software.

A 2 x 2 ANOVA with equal cell frequencies was employed to see the significance of main & interactive effects of Life Stress (High and Low) and Gender (Males and Females) on Mental Health and Coping Responses in Government Employees.

Conclusions

The conclusions were derived as follows:

It was ascertained that Life Stress had significant main effect on Mental Health and Coping Responses in Government Employees. It was empirically proved that Gender had significant main effect on Mental Health and Coping Responses in Government Employees.

It was theoretically ascertained that Life Stress had significant interactive effect on Mental Health but not on Coping Responses in Government Employees. The results also depict that Gender had significant interactive effect on Mental Health and Coping Responses in Government Employees. The results also reflect that Life Stress and Gender had significant interactive effect on Mental Health but not on Coping Responses on Government Employees.

It was also empirically proved that Life Stress and Gender had significant interactive effect on Mental Health but not on Coping Responses.

Major Findings

The major findings of the present study are that Life Stress impacts Mental

Health and Coping Responses in Government Employees. Gender plays a positive role in Mental Health and Coping Responses in Government Employees.

Life Stress influences Mental Health but does not affect in Government Employees. On the other hand, Gender impacts Mental Health and Coping Responses in Government Employees and Gender conjointly influences Mental Health but fails to affect Coping Responses in Government Employees.

The study also reflects that Life Stress and Gender together influences Mental Health but fails to affect Coping Responses in Government Employees.

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