ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS ON CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

Objectives/Purpose: *The aim of the research is to establish the different causes of the organizational stress in time of economic crisis.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *The research methodology contains an questionnaire applied to 58 respondents from different types of companies from Romania, to workers and to managers.*

Results: *The research results consist in the different causes of the organizational stress, the ways/means by which the organizations cope to stress and the adaptive response to stress.*

Implications: *The problem of organizational stress should attract increasingly more attention of managers, which has so far not felt that stress affects the employees work.*

Originality/Value: *The contribution of this paper consists in the analysis of the causes of the organizational stress in time of crisis, the effects and the strategy to combat it.*

KEYWORDS: *organizational stress, crisis, causes of stress, effects of the stress, coping.*

INTRODUCTION

It is known that job generated stress has damaging consequences for both individuals and organizations. Due to this, the topic of stress in the workplace has become increasingly important over recent years. Stress is a state of tension experienced by individuals facing extraordinary demands, constraints or opportunities.

Stress is a central issue that management need to address in order to maximise employee performance and productivity. Therefore employers and managers cannot disregard the stress levels of their employees, and it is in management and the organisations own self interest to find ways to decrease stress. Individuals must also be aware of their stress levels and make an effort to manage their own stress levels to maintain a happy lifestyle and good relationships.

What is organizational stress?

Organizational stress is the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when there is a poor match between job demands and the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. (Palmer, S. & Cooper, C., *How to Deal with Stress*, London, 2007)

Stress - the responses of our bodies and minds have to the demands placed on them - is a normal part of life and a normal part of any job. Without stress, we wouldn't meet deadlines, strive to hit sales or production targets, or line up new clients. Meeting the demands and challenges of a job is part of what makes work interesting and satisfying, and it's often what allows people to develop new skills and advance in their careers.

In the workplace, we regularly experience stress - causing situations, react to them with heightened tension, then return to a more relaxed state when the crisis, big or small, is resolved. However, problems occur when stress is so overwhelming or constant that the tension never abates and we never get to relax.

What causes organizational stress?

Some jobs are stressful by definition because they're physically dangerous (such as firefighting or criminal justice), involve matters of life and death (emergency functions), or are psychologically demanding (social work, teaching). But people who stamp metal or crunch numbers can also be subject to stress on the job.

Organizational stress is usually the result of high demands on the job, real or perceived lack of control concerning those demands, poor day-to-day organization and communication, and an unsupportive work environment.

The following chart lays out many of the factors that lead to organizational stress: (Job Stress Management: Stress Causes & Effects; Tips for Workplace Stress Reduction - Article November 12 2007)

Factors that Lead to Organizational Stress

Types of Job Stressors	Examples
Specific work factors	• Excessive workload.
	• Tedious or meaningless tasks.
	• Long hours and low pay.
	• Infrequent rest breaks.
	• Unreasonable performance demands.
Physical environment	• Noise and overcrowding.
	• Poor air quality.
	• Ergonomic problems.
	• Health and safety risks (heavy equipment, toxic chemicals).
Organizational practices	• Unclear responsibilities or expectations.
	• Conflicting job demands.
	• Multiple supervisors.
	• Lack of autonomy or participation in decision-making.
	• Inefficient communication patterns.
	• Lack of family-friendly policies.
Workplace change	• Fear of layoff.
	• Frequent personnel turnover.
	• Lack of preparation for technological changes.
	• Poor chances for advancement or promotion.
	• Tensions brought about by greater workplace diversity.
Interpersonal relationships	• Distant, uncommunicative supervisors.
	• Poor performance from subordinates.
	• Office politics, competition, and other conflicts among staff.
	• Bullying or harassment.
	• Problems caused by excessive time away from family.

Research method

The aim of the research is to establish the different causes of the organizational stress in time of economic crisis.

For the researched methodology it had been used an questionnaire applied to 58 respondents from different types of companies from Romania (8,6% from small companies, 39,7% from middle companies and 51,7% from large companies).

The main activity of the companies where are working the respondents are: public 12,1%, financial/banking 12,1%, sales/production 27,6%, trade 20,7%, service/consulting 20,7% and other activities 6,9%; the position of the respondents in the companies top manager 8,6%, middle manager 48,3% and supervisor 43,1%.

Analysis results

Analyzing the responses from the applied questionnaire it can be said that in this time of crisis the employees and managers are stress and this issue should attract increasingly more attention of managers, which has so far not felt that stress affects the employees work.
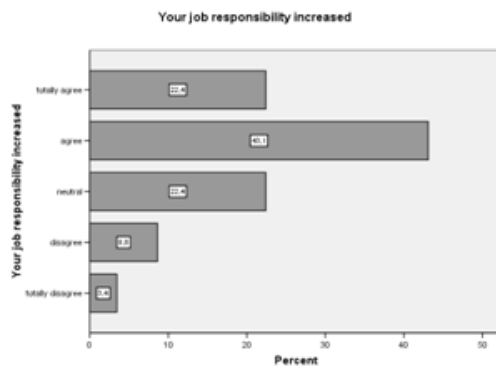
Due to economic changes from the last period, in the most organizations the employees and managers had to work in a fast pace, or their job description have change. These things have led to an increase in job responsibility, and that and it creates a state of stress (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Distribution regarding the increase of the job responsabilities

In a period of information, when everything is changing with speed, organizations must adapt to these changes, especially in this time of crisis, by making decisions in a fast rhythm. Because of the working rhythm most of the employees, also the managers, may feel a stress which affect the quality of their work and theire health (see figure 2).
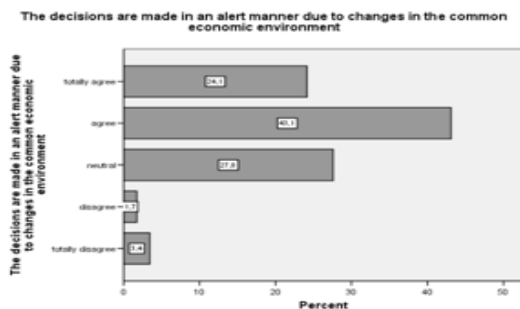
Figure 2. Distribution regarding the making of the decisions

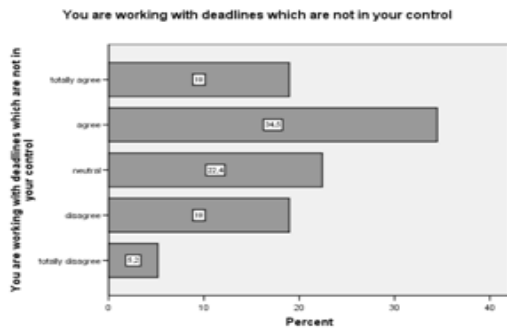**You are working with deadlines which are not in your control**

Figure 3. Distribution regarding the deadlines

Another source of stress of the employees, in this time, is the working with deadlines which are not in their control. 53,5% from the respondents agree that they feel this discomfort regarding theire work in the last period (see figure 3).

Waiting for information from other colleagues or departments, you slows you working rithm
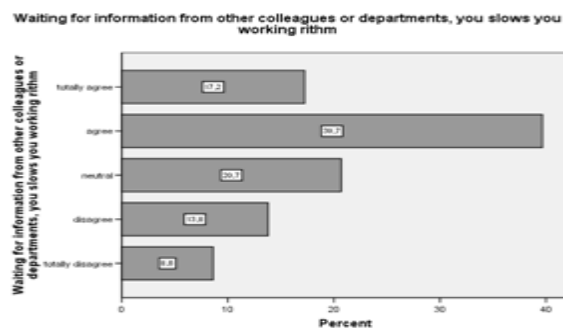

Figure 4. Distribution regarding the waiting for information

Waiting for information from other colleagues or departments was always a problem in different organizations, but in the last period, increasingly more employees complain about it. 56,9% from the respondents agree with this statement, also saying that this affects their quality of work (see figure 4).
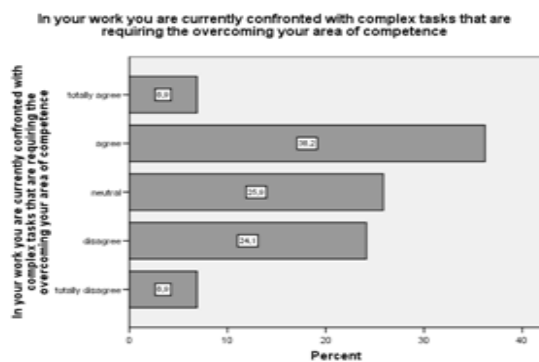
In your work you are currently confronted with complex tasks that are requiring the overcoming your area of competence

Figure 5. Distribution regarding the overcoming of the area of competence

Due to economic crisis in the last period, many of the organizations had to give up a fairly large number of employees. This has led to overloading the remaining staff with different tasks which sometimes require the overcoming area of competence. 43,1% of the respondents agree with this statement, while 25,9% are not sure about it, because they are not sure about their job description (see figure 5).

What can managers do to reduce stress at work?

Stress on the job creates high costs for businesses and institutions, reducing morale, productivity, and earnings. Clearly, it is in every employer's best interests to reduce

organizational stress as much as possible. Businesses can lower and prevent job stress through two methods: (Job Stress Management: Stress Causes & Effects; Tips for Workplace Stress Reduction - Article November 12 2007).

- **Stress management** programs and training for employees.
- **Organizational changes** that improve working conditions.

Changing the Organization to Reduce Organizational Stress

Improve communication
- Share information with employees to reduce uncertainty about their jobs and futures.
- Clearly define employees' roles and responsibilities.
- Make communication friendly and efficient, not mean-spirited or petty.

Consult your employees
- Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their jobs.
- Consult employees about scheduling and work rules.
- Be sure the workload is suitable to employees' abilities and resources; avoid unrealistic deadlines.
- Show that individual workers are valued.

Offer rewards and incentives
- Praise good work performance verbally and institutionally.
- Provide opportunities for career development.
- Promote an "entrepreneurial" work climate that gives employees more control over their work.

Cultivate a friendly social climate
- Provide opportunities for social interaction among employees.
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy for harassment.
- Make management actions consistent with organizational values.

What can employees do to reduce organizational stress?

While organizational change comes from management, there are still many things employees - individually or collectively - can do to reduce workplace stress. (Job Stress Management: Stress Causes & Effects; Tips for Workplace Stress Reduction - Article November 12 2007)

Stand Up for Yourself
- **Get a job description.** If your employer hasn't provided a specific, written description of your job, ask for one, or, better, ask to negotiate one. You can object to what and insist on what you do want. If there is a compromise, it's because you agreed to it. With a clear job description, your expectations are spelled out, as are your boss's."
- **Change your job.** If you like where you're working but your job is too stressful, ask if the company can tailor the job to your skills or move you to a less pressured slot.
- **Get support**. Use the local, state, and federal agencies created to support workers' interests - and your union, if you belong to one - to back you up in situations that expose you to unnecessary danger, unsafe or unhealthful conditions, or undue harassment. While some locations and agencies are more sympathetic to employees' rights than others, sometimes simply mentioning that you know where to turn for help is enough to start an employer thinking about improvement.
- **Get a new job**. If the level of stress at your job is harming your health and your relationships, and you don't see any prospect of real change, it may be time to move on.

Eliminate Self-Defeating Behaviors

Many of us make job stress worse with patterns of thought or behavior that keep us from relieving pressure on ourselves. If you can turn around these self-defeating habits, you'll find employer-imposed stress easier to handle.

- **Resist perfectionism.** No project, situation, or decision is ever perfect, and you put undue stress on yourself by trying to do everything perfectly. When you set unrealistic goals for yourself or try to do too much, you're setting yourself up to fall short. Do your best, and you'll do fine.
- **Clean up your act.** If you're always running late, set your clocks and watches fast and give yourself extra time. If your desk is a mess, file and throw away the clutter; just knowing where everything is saves time and cuts stress. Make to-do lists and cross off items as you accomplish them. Plan your day and stick to the schedule - you'll feel less overwhelmed.
- **Flip your negative thinking.** If you see the downside of every situation and interaction, you'll find yourself drained of energy and motivation. Try to think positively about your work, avoid negative-thinking co-workers, and pat yourself on the back about small accomplishments, even if no one else does.

Conclusion

In this period of economic crisis the organizations are in continuos change. Due to this fact, both managers and employees may feel a discomfort in terms of work, situation associated with various problems from the workplace, like job responsabilitys, deadlines, area of competences.

There is need to manage with the stress in present day. Though Stress is helpful but usually harmful for his/ her health and ultimately affect the performance. So stress need to be managed with minimum its debilitating effects. It has been used to denote the way of dealing with the stress or the effort major condition of harm threat or challenge when routine or automatic response is not readily available. It is also suggested that various strategies to be used to manage with stress. Mover formulated strategies vary from person to person and in the same person form time to time. The various strategies may be at individual level and at origination level. In competitive and complex world implementation of the strategies to manage stress may be considered with extra caution.

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