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Coping With Work-Related Stress among Factory Workers In The Manufacturing Industry

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Abstract: *This study is entitled "Coping with Work-Related Stress Among Factory Workers in the Manufacturing Industry". The study was to establish the significant differences in the stress coping styles among factory workers in the manufacturing industry. It sought to identify the various causes of stress, the effects of stress and the coping styles of workers in the respondents' assessment. The methodology used was descriptive-survey. The respondents of this study consisted of factory workers from different departments of a leading brand manufacturing snack food and confectionary. The researcher made use of stratified random sampling to divide the company into smaller groups.*

This study used the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) Theory to provide the explanation on how the body changes physiologically during stressful times and events. The conceptual framework suggested that in order to create a good stress management intervention program, it is best to know and understand stress, its causes, its effects and the various coping styles among factory workers. From the findings of the study it was concluded that there is no significant difference in the stress coping styles of factory workers when they are grouped according to shift. Suggestions from factory workers to cope with stress included increase in salary and possibly other benefits.

Keywords*: Work-related stress, stress coping styles, factory workers, General Adaptation Syndrome Theory, day and night shifts.*

I. Introduction

In today's fast paced world, stress is an unavoidable reality of life particularly in the workplace. The term "stress" in the workplace has become a very popular word, described as those pressures induced by the demands of the work environment that threaten the overall wellbeing of an individual worker. Commonly, stress occurs when these various combinations of work-related demands exceed the capacity and capability of a worker to cope with them. Stress could impact the state of mind, the strength of one's emotion and the organization of a person's personality and behavior (Ahmad & Xavier, 2010). Basically, it is not just the health of workers which could be affected by work-related stress but also the productivity of the company.

Stress in the workplace could be caused by very tight deadlines, boring work, inadequate work environment and conflicts with peers and the immediate supervisors. In the manufacturing set-up, workers become stress due to high job demands, low job control, low social support, role ambiguity and conflict, the physical, chemical and ergonomics of the work environment, work patterns with work schedule and shift work, and job insecurity regarding future employment (Watanabe, 2003). These stressors must be recognized by employers as vital concerns when it comes to health and safety. Hence, companies should take necessary steps towards creating interventions to ensure that their employees are not experiencing unnecessary stress.

Stress is manifested through various physical, psychological and behavioral changes. Physically stress could be shown in the form of insomnia or sleeping difficulty, headaches and possibly stomach upset. Feeling of being depressed and reduced ability to concentrate or make decisions are signs of psychological effects of stress. While behavioral symptoms of stress are displayed when an individual is frequently absent and has mood swings and always irritable. Workers that are experiencing work-related stress may come up with different styles to prevent further damages to their health and well-being.

No industry is at liberty from stress including that of manufacturing. Stress most likely will result to understaffed and unproductive workplace due to absenteeism and presenteeism. Factory workers in the manufacturing snack food and confectionary industry is no exemption to a stressful workplace. Ordinarily, these workers are concern on their health and safety while inside the factory. Factory workers experience that feeling of having too much in a plate because of big production quotas that appear to be discouraging. It is also

very physically tiresome to these workers on working long, irregular and unsocial hours due to difficult shifting patterns. Hence, it becomes impossible for them to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Manufacturing industry has been adopting normally to the financial climate of a country which often led to reduction in employee numbers particularly during the times of recession. Since job security is highly important therefore this causes too much stress. Being out of control over purpose and skills creates stress also among factory workers in the manufacturing industry. Poorly designed work stations is very frustrating and inhospitable that may create uncomfortableness among workers in a highly physically demanding job.

The variables investigated under this study are the causes of stress, the effects of stress and the stress coping styles of factory workers in the manufacturing industry. The researcher has recommended as an output a possible stress management intervention program that will help the day-shift and night shift factory workers of the manufacturing industry.

II. Literature Review

In the Philippines, most factory workers are employed in manufacturing businesses. Although they are considered the lowest rank and the lowest paid, theirs is the hardest job. Hence, they are the most stressed people in the manufacturing industry. For this situation, they need to have adequate sleep, enjoy life inside and outside the place of work, relate harmoniously with co-workers and bosses and look at the bright side of life.

Demographics and Stress

Sources and effects of stress could be different to people. Differences in individual characteristics such as personality and coping styles in order to meet the environmental challenges could vary from person to person. Jick & Mitz (1985) concluded that women suffer more workplace stress as compared with men. The experiences of women are unique such as discrimination, stereotyping, marriage/work interface and social isolation that are considered as stressors. Therefore, gender has a vital role in considering workplace stress. Single people are more stressed than those who are married. According to (Cairney, et al., 2003) this is for the reason that single individuals have lower level of perceived social support and social involvement that their married counterparts. The study made by (Stanetic & Tesanovic, 2013) revealed that the longer the period of stay in a company, the more stressful it is. Workers that are having the highest length of service were found to be more exhausted emotionally because of the physical nature of their work and the environment.

What is Stress and Its Causes?

Stress is the relationship between the person and his work environment and the person perceived the latter as taxing or exceeding his resources, thereby endangering his wellbeing. Here the stressors pose as challenges and threats. Stress also is the interaction of the individual and the source of demand in the environment. Stress is a condition that happens when a person experiences a demand that goes beyond his real or perceived abilities which made it hard for him to cope resulting in disturbances and disequilibrium of his psychological and physiological factors.

Causes or sources of stress are numerous. Factors that are inherent to the job, the role inside the organization, career development, work relationship and just being a part of the organization could sometimes cause stress (Hoel, et al, 2010). Workloads and the demand of the job also produces stress that may complicate the health and decrease work performance and productivity (Anderson & Pulich, 2001). Role ambiguity where there is lack of clarity about the job objectives can also posed as a stressor. Anderson & Pulich (2001) also mentioned that being stuck in a position without any career advancement reflects being under promoted and lacking security of tenure which is stressful. Relationship with bosses and co-workers and group dynamics are vital factors in a harmonious working environment and when conflicts happen may bring stress to those involved (Hoel, et al., 2010).

Further, work overload (Wickramasinghe, 2010) bullying and harassment (Wallace, et al. 2014), conflicting performance expectation (Palmer, et al, 2004) and poor quality performance are stressors that need to be addressed. The causes of stress in the workplace is predominantly more organizational but the impact is more personal (Kinman & Jones, 2005).

Workplace stress is a big problem particularly to those workers in the night shift. Shift work is a different approach compared to the standard 8:00AM to 5:00PM work schedule. Most manufacturing companies specifically in the production areas work on shifting to ensure continuity of production. Hence, the working hours here are irregular and rotating (Lozano, et. Al, 2012).

Effects of Stress

Workplace stress may affect people differently in areas such as physical, emotional, behavioral and cognitive, Psychological impact of stress could be in the form of depression, persistent anxiety and resentment.

Emotionally when people are stressed they are likely to be irritable and with mood swings. In terms of behavior, stressed workers may exhibit hostility in the workplace, low morale, frequent absenteeism, presenteeism and personal conflict with other workers. Low recall, decreased concentration and decreased ability to make decisions are some of the cognitive effects of stress (Colligan & Higgins, 2005). The ill effects of stress should be remedied when signs had started in order to avoid the worst effects (Mazo, 2015).

Stress Coping Styles

Stress management is so critical for workers that they tend to cope with stress using various styles. Exercise has proven to have a beneficial effect on a person's mental and physical health during times of stress. Some people tend to turn to alcohol and do smoking when stress which may increase the chances of illnesses when not interrupted. Eating plenty a healthy food and a balanced diet while in a relax mode could be interesting and beneficial (Nordqvist, et al., 2004).

Coping is apparently the solution to fight the direct negative impact of stress to workers. Coping tries to reduce the internal and external demands using cognitive and behavioral effort by changing the situation itself. This is known as problem-focused coping. On the other hand, emotion-focused coping does not change the problem or the situation but help create new meanings to regulate the emotions that are aroused. (Johari & Hassim, 2009). In the Philippine-setting, mostly factory workers make used of emotion-focused coping.

III. Theoretical Framework

Stress happens every day. Even if stressors are always around, it is very possible to practice stress management and still remains healthy. Managing stress is highly significant in order to prevent damaging results such as insomnia, irritability and mental weariness.

The It was Hans Selye who experimented and coined this theory. These changes are actually responses of the body which come into different stages including alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. According to Selye (1976b, 1976c) posited that these various responses must be comprehended in order to cope with stressors.

Initially during the alarm reaction stage (Selye, 1979), the human body when stressed, experiences initial signs of a physiological response. It is this natural reaction of the body that prepares the decision whether to stay away or protect oneself from the approaching harmful circumstances. The responses of the body may include increase pulse rate, high blood pressure and adrenalin rush.

The resistance stage comes right after the alarm reaction stage. It is during the resistance stage that body starts to repair itself. The blood pressure, adrenalin rush and heart rate start to stabilize. During this stage, the body may pass into a recovery that makes it highly alert for the time being. Later, as the body continuously repair itself until it would finally reaches a pre-stress condition. There are really very stressful conditions that that can be experienced for a prolong time. Eventually, the body is able to adapt and learn to live with stress. Although sometimes people think that they have managed stress well, but their bodies' physical responses tell something else. Some of these responses include irritability, frustration and poor concentration. The body then goes into some various changes just to make adjustment with stress. If the body without gaps still continuously remain stress, then this can lead to exhaustion.

During the exhaustion stage, the body is already in the prolonged stress. Here the body can no longer combat stress because it has no more strength. Fatigue, burnout, depression, anxiety and decreased stress tolerance are some of the many signs of exhaustion.

In the workplace, particularly in the manufacturing industry, factory workers feel exhausted due to long work hours and extended and irregular shifts. Extended working hours may lead to potential health hazards due to extended exposure to noise, chemicals, and others. Fatigue can be the reason for tiredness, drowsiness, bad temper, reduced attentiveness, weakened decision making, and absence of motivation, attention and recollection.

IV. Conceptual Model And Hypothesis

The conceptual framework suggested management needs to discover and understand the causes of stress, the effects of stress and various stress coping styles of factory workers. The manufacturing industry has its own uniqueness when it comes to stress and the coping styles. The long work hours and extended and irregular shifts schedules are considered. Manufacturing companies ought to help prevent and identify workplace stress. The final output is a workplace intervention program in stress management in the said industry as shown in Figure 1.

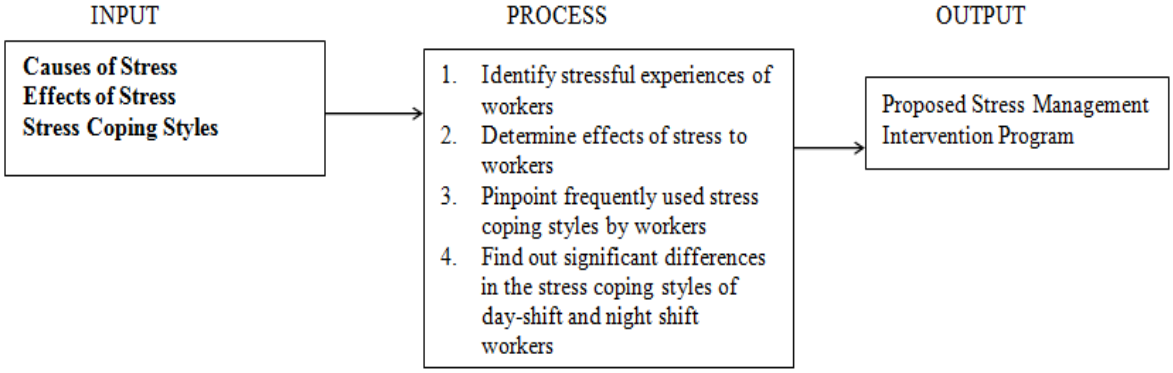

Figure 1 Conceptual Paradigm on Coping with Work-Related Stress Among Factory Workers

Null Hypothesis

There are no significant differences in the stress coping styles of day-shift and night shift workers.

V. Methodology

This study utilized the descriptive-survey method of research in an attempt to discover the stress coping styles being used in the manufacturing industry among day and night shift workers for a proposed intervention program. The target respondents who are factory workers came from a leading brand manufacturing snack food and confectionary products situated in the Philippines with several factories in some Asian countries. The researcher made use of three hundred sixty (360) workers coming from various departments such as production, packaging, sacker, warehouse and flexible, maintenance and engineering and quality control. The stratified random sampling was used in this study to obtain the representation of workers from each department.

The self-administered survey questionnaire was used by the researcher as the primary data source. The answers for the questions raised in this study were solicited using the fixed alternative type making use of the Likert scale. Likewise, the researcher also made use of secondary sources of data such as books, journal articles, directives and memoranda, and online review and abstracts.

The survey instrument consisted of four parts. The first part is the demographic profile of the respondents which included their age, gender, civil status, length of service, shift and department. The second part contained stressors which made use of the 5-point Likert scale on the level of stress perceived by workers in their workplace. The scale ranged from Extremely Stressful to Not Stressful at all. The third part consisted of the different effects of stress being experienced by workers and labeled as Extremely Experienced to Not Experienced. The last part presented the various coping mechanisms being used by the workers and measured as Extremely Used to Being Not used. The researcher also provided an open-ended question on the suggestions and recommendations of workers to management in helping them deal with stress in their daily operations.

After the retrieval of the questionnaires from workers, the researcher tabulated and treated the raw data obtained from the survey through Minitab 18 software to get a scientific analysis and interpretation of results. In this study there were four (4) statistical treatments done which consisted of the Percentage, Weighted Mean and T-test.

VI. Results And Discussion

The study was to discover the stress coping styles of factory workers. It sought to identify the significant differences in the respondent's assessment as they are grouped into day-shift and night shift workers. Here are the results of this study as presented below.

1. Profile of the respondents:

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Female	67	19%
Male	293	81%
Civil Status:		
Married	143	40%
Single	217	60%
Age:		
18-20	18	5%

21-25	100	27%
26-30	105	29%
31-35	63	18%
36-40	31	9%
41 and above	43	12%
Length of Service:		
Below one year	38	11%
1-5	188	52%
6-10	95	26%
11-15	21	6%
16-20	8	3%
21-25	5	1%
26-30	5	1%

n=360

Table 1 Profile of the Respondents

There are more male respondents in this study possibly because the manufacturing industry is a male-dominated industry. Mostly, the participants are single. They are in the age range of 26 to 30 years old. They have been in the company and rendering service from one year to five years. Based on the study of (Jick & Mitz, 1985) women suffer more stress because they are often experienced unique stressors such as discrimination, stereotyping, marriage and work interface and social isolation. Single people are reported to be more stressed than married people. Singles were more likely to suffer episodes of depression, more chronic stress and greater number of childhood adversities. People who are single have lower level of perceived social support and social involvement compared with married ones (Cairney et al, 2003). In (Oishi & Machida, 2002) it reported that older people have higher score of perceived work stress due to more responsibilities in the factories. The influence of length of service and age is explained in (Stanetic & Tesanovic, 2015) where the level of stress and emotional exhaustion is higher with workers that have longer tenure and older. The nature of physical environment and work are the common factors for high level of stress.

2. Causes of Stress

Causes of Stress	Rank	Mean	Interpretation
Low salary	1	2.70	Most stressful
Volume of work	2	2.55	Most stressful
Physical environment	3	2.54	Most stressful
Unfairness	4	2.35	Most stressful
Inflexible or difficult working time	5	2.30	Most stressful
Role conflict	6	2.22	Most stressful
Ineffective or poor management	7	2.19	Most stressful
Feeling undervalued	8	2.17	Most stressful
Personal health issues	9	2.16	Most stressful
Lack of training or development opportunities	10	2.1	Most stressful
Disharmony with co-workers	11	2.09	Least stressful
Trouble with boss	12	1.98	Least stressful

Table 2 Causes of Stress among Factory Workers

Most Filipinos especially those working for manufacturing companies have low salary level and causes them to be stressed (Heinemann, et al. 2015). Too much load of work according to Anderson and Pulich (2001) is very demanding and stressful in today's work environment. Factory workers in the manufacturing industry have tons of works to do every day since there is always a continues production of goods to support the market demand. The workload and other job demands have impact on stress and fatigue leading to health compilation and decreased work productivity. Hoel, et al. (2010) theorized that knotty situations between administrators, co-workers and subordinates can be stressful and affects work performance.

3. Effects of Stress in the Individual Worker

Effects of Stress	Rank	Mean	Interpretation
Headaches	1	2.35	Mostly Experienced
Sleeping disorder	2	2.34	Mostly Experienced
Difficulty concentrating and making decisions	2	2.34	Mostly Experienced
Anger, tension and irritability	3	2.30	Mostly Experienced
Feeling sad, frustrated and helpless	4	2.18	Mostly Experienced
Loss of appetite	5	2.18	Mostly Experienced
Voice and hearing loss	6	2.15	Mostly Experienced
High rates of absenteeism and sick leave	7	1.87	Least experienced

Table 3 Effects of Stress in Work among Factory Workers

Factory workers usually experienced headaches during operations because of lack of time to relax and unwind. Based on the reports some ill effects of stress are sleep disorders, less concentration and difficulty in making decisions (Amble & Ingstad, 2015). Factory workers go home late at night due to overtime and then still report to work early. For the night shift, insufficiency of sleep tends to result to irregular sleeping pattern. Most businesses in the manufacturing industry are likely to forego the practice of ergonomics which resulted to more stress for workers.

4. Stress Coping Styles

Stress Coping Styles	Rank	Mean	Interpretation
Eating	1	3.06	Highly being used
Listen to music	2	2.92	Mostly being used
Watching television	2	2.92	Mostly being used
Rest and sleep	3	2.91	Mostly being used
Spending time with family	4	2.88	Mostly being used
Rehydrate with coffee and energy drink	5	2.57	Mostly being used
Quick exercise	6	2.44	Mostly being used
Reading	7	2.43	Mostly being used
Singing in videoke	8	2.36	Mostly being used
Drinking alcohol and smoking	9	2.31	Mostly being used
Get a massage	10	2.13	Mostly being used

Table 4 Stress Coping Styles of Factory Workers

Stress is not an ordinary thing that workers try to find solutions to it by various coping styles (Mazo, 2015) as shown in the table above. It is said that exposure to stressors may lead to digestive problems. Alcohol and smoking (Nordqvist, et al., 2004) sometimes are used to manage stress. Exercise, flexible working hours and recreational activities (Ekundayo, 2014) are utilized to boost health and energy to relieved stress. Shift workers are prone to workplace stress because of the combined busy lives and demands of work while trying to save time and money for their families (Lozano, et al., 2012).

5. Suggestions of Factory Workers in Coping with Stress

Suggestions in Coping with Stress	Frequency	Percentage
Salary increase	120	33%
Relaxation, outing, training and recreations	39	11%
Employee and employer relations/fairness	28	8%
Affordable food and provide free transportation	18	5%
Job rotation/break time/ short working hours	32	9%
Satisfied	17	5%
No comment	106	29%

Table 5 Suggestion on Coping with Stress from Factory Workers

In the Philippines where factory workers are being paid based on minimum working standard mandated by the government, the low salary is actually stressful to them. Low salary causes more stress to those in the factories. This is the main reason why Filipinos belonging to the operation side always request for increase in salaries.

6. Comparative Stress Coping Styles Between Day and Night Shift Factory Workers

Stress Coping Styles	Rank	Mean	Interpretation
Eating			
Day shift	2	2.95	Mostly being used
Night shift	1	1.65	Least being used
Listen to music			
Day shift	1	2.96	Mostly being used
Night shift	3	1.58	Least being used
Watching television			
Day shift	4	2.90	Mostly being used
Night shift	2	1.63	Least being used
Rest and sleep			
Day shift	3	2.94	Mostly being used
Night shift	4	1.57	Least being used
Spending time with family			
Day shift	5	2.87	Mostly being used
Night shift	3	1.58	Least being used
Rehydrate with coffee and energy drink			
Day shift	7	2.48	Mostly being used
Night shift	5	1.45	Least being used
Quick exercise			
Day shift	6	2.56	Mostly being used
Night shift	8	1.33	Least being used
Reading			
Day shift	8	2.34	Mostly being used
Night shift	7	1.37	Least being used
Singing in videoke			
Day shift	10	2.16	Mostly being used
Night shift	6	1.41	Least being used
Drinking alcohol and smoking			
Day shift	9	2.23	Mostly being used
Night shift	9	1.30	Least being used
Get a massage			
Day shift	11	2.06	Mostly being used
Night shift	10	1.22	Least being used

The day shift workers wanted listening to music to feel relax, while the night shift ones preferred eating more to overcome stress. Providing instant comfort (Nordqvist, et al. 2004) like rest and sleep, spending time with family, quick exercise, reading and singing and possibly getting massage are almost similarly done by both the day and the night shifts.

7. Significant Difference between Day and Night Shift Stress Coping Styles

Standard Deviation – α= 0.05
Degree of Freedom =1.00
Tabular Value = 3.841
Computed Value =.79

Therefore: There is no significant difference in the stress coping styles of factory workers when they are grouped according to shift.

VII. Conclusions

The following are the conclusions given the results of the study:

1. Male dominates the manufacturing industry, mostly are single, aged 26 to 30 years old and have remained in the company from one year to five years.
2. The two most stressful factors for the manufacturing industry are the low salary and the volume of work.
3. Headaches and sleeping disorders highly affect the factory workers when they are stressed.
4. There is no significant difference in the stress coping styles of factory workers when they are grouped according to shift.
5. Based on the suggestions of the factory workers from the manufacturing industry, stress can be overcome through increase in salary and possibly other benefits.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are the recommendations of the researcher based on the conclusions:

1. Review the present situation of the factory workers in the manufacturing industry in order to recognize the genuine problem on stress and take appropriate action when possible.
2. Create a benefit program for factory workers. Provide good distribution of working hours, cut down so much overtime and possibly employ additional workers.
3. Human resource department should formulate a stress management program that is preventive in nature with proper consultation from employees, health professionals and the government.
4. With technology at hand, creating a unique design of the work stations and changing and developing the processes must be employed with suggestions from workers who would be affected.
5. Management must always enhance and upgrade the working conditions giving opportunities for factory workers to develop themselves personally and professionally.
6. For future researchers, it is encouraged to study also other industries as they may have unique sets of stressors that could be coped differently.

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