



Stress management and organizational behaviour

Nwokwu Tochukwu Christian

Post Graduate & Mid-Career Development Unit, University of Colombo, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Abstract

Stress has become important issue in most of the organizations irrespective of the organizational size and the industry in which it operates. This is more evident in the apparel industry as has more labor usage. This study aims to identify organizational behavior issue at Hameedias Group. Identified Organisatioanl Behavior in the company is “stress”. Stress causes communication gap, reduction in employee retention and high employee turnover, absenteeism, motivation, low quality and defective products at different levels in the company. For the study purpose thirty Executive level employees selected from Hameedia Group in order to carry out the analysis. High stress is a disruptive and an expensive organizational behavior which effects company products quality, low returns as well as low health conditions of employees. This report analyses stress as organizational behavior issue in Hameedias Group. Its a leading garment manufacturing organization in Sri Lanka which imports raw material foreign market. This report further highlights the consequences of stress at three level such as work place, Individual and organizational level. Finally based on the analysis recommendations are given to mitigate the Stress and its consequences.

Keywords: stress management, apparel industry, organizational behavior, communication, employee retention and turnover, absenteeism, motivation, and productivity

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the organization

Hameedias Group was established in 1949 and has become a leading menswear brand that is synonymous with style and quality. Since its inception 67 years ago, the company has achieved phenomenal growth and today the Hameedia brand is a household name across Sri Lanka and is rapidly gaining popularity around the world. Hameedia has established itself as a leader in providing high quality custom tailored and ready-made clothing options for men, to help them dress their very best on every occasion. Hameedia caters to men of distinction, they may be corporate executives, outdoor enthusiasts, the directors of corporations, sports personalities, film stars or bridegrooms, but they all share an appreciation for Hameedia’s fashion forward ethos and commitment to excellence. Hameedia’s portfolio comprises four of its own brands that cater to different market segments and offer a full range of clothing, footwear and accessories. The Signature brand is focused on young men, The Le Bond brand is designed for stylish and ambitious millennial and the Envoy brand caters to high profile, fashionable gentlemen. Hameedia’s portfolio is further strengthened through its strategic business partnerships with leading menswear brands from around the world, including Raymond, Parx, Park Avenue, Lee, Louis Philippe, Van Heusen, Allen Solly, Killer, Wrangler and Adidas. Every single Hameedia product is made to provide ultimate levels of customer satisfaction. The company has a strong network of spacious and luxurious showrooms located across Colombo and its suburbs and is dedicated to offering customers a world-class retail experience. A team of over 1,400 visionary professionals form the backbone of Hameedia’s dynamic operation and they are trained to deliver a seamless and customer-centric sales experience. Looking to the future,

Hameedia is well-poised to strengthen its position as Sri Lanka’s leading menswear brand, whilst simultaneously expanding its global footprint and brand presence (www. Hameedia.lk).

2. Literature Review

The stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, demand, or resource related to what the individual desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important (Stephen P. Robbins and Timothy A. Judge, 2013) ^[2]. In general, we can say that Different people have different understanding of stress. Stress is an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological stimulation that people experience in situations that they perceive as dangerous or threatening to their wellbeing. Challenge stressors, Stressors associated with workload, pressure to complete tasks, and time urgency, hindrance stressors, stressors that keep you from reaching your goals (Stephen P. Robbins and Timothy A. Judge, 2013) ^[2]. A leading expert on stress, cardiologist Robert Eliot gives the following prescription for dealing with stress: “Rule No. 1 is, don’t sweat the small stuff. Rule No. 2 is, it’s all small stuff. And if you can’t fight and you can’t flee, flow.” What is happening in today’s organizations, however, is that the “small stuff” is getting to employees, and they are not going with the “flow.” Stress has become a major buzzword and legitimate concern of the times (Fred Luthans, 2013) ^[1]. Communication is the conveying of messages by exchanging thoughts or information via speech, visuals, signals, writing, or behavior. Communication requires a sender, a message, and a recipient, although the receiver may not be present or aware of the sender’s intent to communicate at the time of communication. Communication requires that the communicating parties share

some area of commonality. The communication process is complete once the receiver has understood the message of the sender (Bernad, 2003). The concept of motivation is not new in the field of Human resource management. Several scholars have defined and viewed this term in several fields and they have provided different meanings to motivation of employee. However, several of these definitions show similar ideas. From the perspective of psychology, human studies and economy, motivation is referred to one reason or many that make an individual to get engaged in a specific behavior (Bratton & Gold, 2007, p. 112). From this context, an individual can be influenced by several drives and fundamental needs such as food and desire for a state of being or an object can be included in this reason for motivating an individual to act in a specific manner or to perform certain tasks. On the other hand, the concept of motivation refers to extrinsic together with intrinsic factors that makes a person to take specific actions (Adair, 2009, p. 101). Employee turnover can be defined as voluntarily or involuntary permanent withdrawal from an organization (Robbins, Judge & Vohra 2012)^[2]. As Nawaz (2009) indicates that there are two types of employee turnover happen in companies, voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary employee turnover involves employee’s intention to quit the job or decide to give resignation from job. It can be due to better opportunity, job dissatisfaction, work pressure supervisor’s bad behavior, etc. And involuntary employee turnover is that when an organization fires employees by itself. It can be like retirement cases, organization needs to cut cost, restructure or downsizing, low performers firing from the job or dismissals, permanent disability or employee death case etc. Absenteeism has been defined as non-attendance when an employee is scheduled to work (Price and Mueller, 1986). Sometimes there have been absent from work for one reason or another. Some are absenting more than others, but when it takes place on a regular basis then absenteeism becomes a noticeable problem for the company. A theoretical model for Preventing Stress is referred in Annexure 5 and suggested for the company under the recommendation of this report.

3. Methodology

This study engages in identifying the level of stress of the executive employees in the Hameedia Group in Sri Lanka. The study was carried out through a survey and primary data were collected at the Hameedias’ Head Office located at Ratmalana. For the survey an online questionnaire was send using “Google forms” for a selected number of Executive employees. The responses were automated and summary charts prepared through “Google Forms” as displayed in Figures 1-10. Face to face-interview held with the Group HR Manager and Assistant Manager – Human Resources, over the phone interview with the Eravul Plant Manager and few Executives from Hameedia Group. We have selected 30 Executives from the organization Hameedia Group representing 23% females and 77% males (Figure1). A brainstorming session was carried out for all group members to recognize the scope, objectives and to understand the assignment on Organization Behavior. With the view of collecting primary data, secondary data, interviews, related journal articles, corporate web sites, corporate magazines and articles on press releases were further assisted on our assignment.

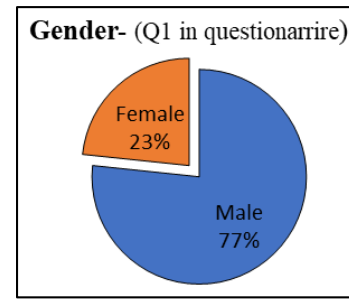


Fig 1: Gender

3.1 Data sets and statistical records

Following Data sets and selected sample respondents were collected from the organization

1. Details on employee retention - referred in Annexure 1- Retention Ratio calculation for the Hameedia Group
2. Monthly details on absentees for consecutive past three years 2014 to 2017–referred in Annexure 2-Monthly Absentee Data Sheet
3. Respondent details on OB questionnaire –referred in Annexure 3

Using the above data the study has been carried out on stress and other issues related to organizational behavior.

3.2 Organization behavioral issues with Hameedia Group and background of the main organizational behavior issue

It has been identified that Hameedias Group has strong concerns on stress. Hameedias has responded to stress management in order to enhance their legitimacy and survival by providing necessary resources as it suits them. It is evident by the survey data obtained and results indicated 47% out of the sample selected employees were on stress (Figure2). Out of the sample selected there were three executives from Eravul plant, represented two females and a male. Female working employees that represented overall 23% (Figure 1) of the sample selected.

At the interview with the Eravul plant manager stated that the female employees (Executives) have personal issues such as family commitments and other social activities reflects on the job effectiveness. As women have more commitments on family matters like house management, child care and elders care such management is crucial. These factors lead female employees to take leave frequently, some instances without prior approval. To address these types of issues Hameedia Group has facilitated manufacturing plants located in rural areas as Eravul in Puttlam District. Employees of this area were provided closer location to their home and enabled the employees to keep away from stress on transport and time management.

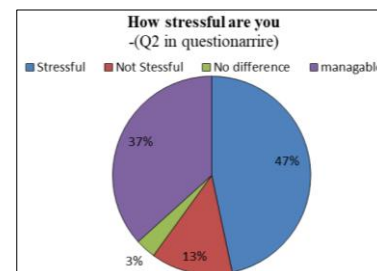


Fig 2: How Stressful are you

As evident above “Stress” is an identified main organizational behavior issue at Hameedia Group as it represents 47% Executive level employees are at stress.

3.3 Other issues on “organizational behavior”

Following complementary issues were identified on with related to work place, individual level and in organization itself which relates to “Organizational Behavior”.

Work place

1. Communication
2. Employee Turnover
3. Absenteeism

Individual level

4. Inadequacy of salaries
5. Motivation

Organizational level

6. Highly defective products
7. Lower returns (low profits)
8. Generic issues

4. Evaluation of the organizational issues

4.1. Stresses at different levels

World at large criticized “Stress” as events or situations that cause them to feel tension, pressure, or negative emotions such as anxiety and anger. Stress results from work place. In broad terms, it is experienced when there is an awareness of a substantial imbalance between demand and capability, under conditions where failure to meet the demand is perceived to have unwanted consequences. Stress is a phenomenon that is experienced in the whole world and manifests itself among workers as a result of pressures originating from the workplace and outside the workplace. Many individuals in the workforce deal with at least some sort of stress in their lives, sometimes it is stress that stems from family problems, finances, and other personal issues and other times stress comes directly from the workplace. Individuals deal with much stress on a daily basis that it can significantly affect their performance and productivity. Job stress is considered to be a worldwide problem and increasing steadily in the Sri Lanka and other nations where the apparel industry is growing rapidly. Poor salary packages, long working hours, mistreatment of employees by supervisors are the major causes of creating stress in employees. Job stress produces large number of undesirable effects for individual, work place and organization. Srilanka continue to experience stress as a result of hardships such as the recession, drought and inflation among these identified factors. As in the industry practice, Hameedia Group too contained with low salaries, lack of communication, improper planning, heavy workload, stringent deadlines and few opportunities for promotion. The study revealed that employees have an increased stress level which has led to high employee turnover with less retention, absenteeism, poor health and safety conditions, where these issues are discussed from 4.2 - 4.7 below.

4.2 Communication

Company’s Assistant Manager stated “We have an open-door

policy for communication” at the interview with related to the employee grievances and issues. In spite of the culture of the organization culture the organization has no appointee for resolutions for grievances and issues. Employees were affected with the introduction of the new designing technology that was adopted few years ago. This was not communicated to the employees to incorporate and redesign their plan. Communication had become necessary for up skilling, handling multiple tasks and new hazards arisen at work. With the expansion of the company formal communication had become vital in the organization. Communication has been a challenging issue in the company due to these reasons (Figure 3). The sudden communication leads to cause pressure among executives. Employees were required to submit reports and make programs frequently and implement innovative changes to make the company competitive in the global market.

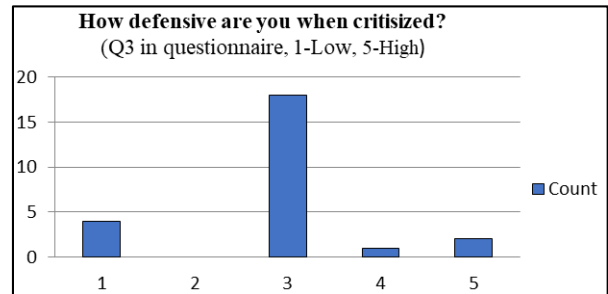


Fig 3: How defensive when you are criticized

4.3 Employee retention and turnover

Hameedia Group maintains high employee retention overall. However, in the study it was revealed that five sub departments have low retention ratios are being maintain (Annexture2). High employee turnover is harmful to Hameedia productivity because employee population of a Hameedia is containing high percentage of newly recruited executives as the skilled executives often leave. A high Employee turnover rate increases recruiting, selection and training cost as well on the other hand (Annexure 1- Retention Ratio calculation for the Hameedia Group). A significant number of employees were resigning almost every other month at the Executive level in Hameedia. They are giving various reasons and excuses for their resignation and the organization is finding it hard to immediately replace the skilled employees who are leaving the Hameedia. 36% out of the selected sample takes increased risk-taking activities during stress situation.

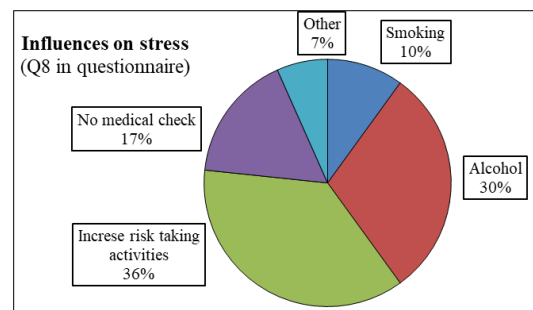


Fig 4: Influences on stress

4.4 Inadequate salaries

At Hameedias Group, Executives have multiple job titles such as Supervisor, Safety Officer and Quality Assurance Officer. However with the complex job roles they perform the executives need to survive without adequate increase in salary. This environment has become stressful for executives. Organisations budgets and targets were extraordinary at their promotional seasons as in “Global Fashion week” and on seasonal festivals as Ramadan, Avurudu and on Christmas. Organisations expectations and too many responsibilities cause stress with the inadequacy in financial benefits.

4.5 Absenteeism

Because of stress many Executives don’t have interest to go to work regularly and taking leaves. Mainly Work load and short deadlines causing stress at workplace. Because of stress many Executives don’t have interest to go to work regularly and taking leaves. Mainly Work load and short deadlines causing stress at workplace. With the study, it has been identified 37% represents out of the sample selected were difficult to stay calm under pressure. This factor has a possibility to cause Absenteeism. Though certain studies in the HR field reveal that people who are dissatisfied with their jobs are absent more frequently. In Hameedias Group it was observed that was not a critical reason for stress management.

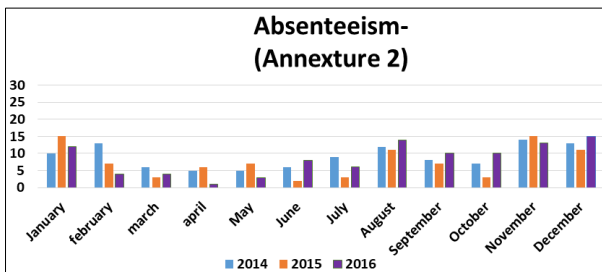


Fig 5: Absenteeism

The above graph is clearly showing absenteeism and during January, February, August, November, December it is experienced more.

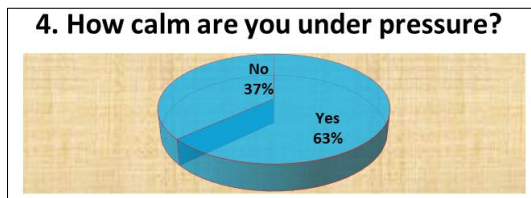


Fig 6: How calm are you under pressure

It is evident to a certain extent that the type of dissatisfaction that most often leads employees to miss work is dissatisfaction with the work itself. Such displeased employees become absent due to work pressure, long working hours and the belief that their work is less important (Jinky Leilanie Lu, 2010). Following graph in Figure 7 represents the employee satisfaction towards their job role.

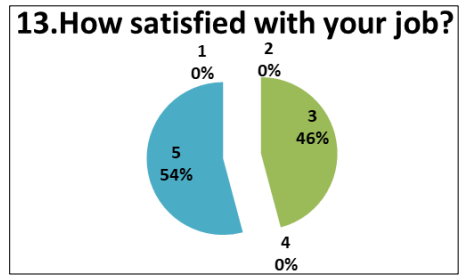


Fig 7: Job satisfaction

4.6 Motivation

Hameedia Group maintains motivated employees by persuading their workforce by assigning specific challenges link to their Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Due to stress, many executives do not get motivated and failed to perform their tasks. The data analysis (Figure 2) clearly shows that the Executive level employees are more prone to stress as compared to officers working in the organization. It further shows that there is a significant relationship between employee motivation and job stress. Higher level of job stress leads to lesser motivation and vice-versa. It is commonly understood pay is the basic motivational factor for employees. Reasonable rate of pay increases motivational level of employees which is not being seen at Hameedia with the evidence of questionnaire. Most of the employees of the Hameedia feel that they are not able to satisfy their basic needs with the pay they get from their job.

4.7. Low quality, defective products

In the study it was revealed that Executives make many mistakes when they are on pressure. As shown in the diagram (Figure 8) below the level of mistakes that the employees make were at series 4 means that they agreed upon a high tendency of defects in their job. One instance an Assistant Manager Internal Audit stated that “Mistakes are not permitted for Auditors”. However this scenario makes him very stressful at seasonal level and achieving their targets. One of the Plant Manager agreed on the study results as their productivity levels have dropped during the Female employees return from their confinement leave. As a result their level of mistakes and leave taking is high.

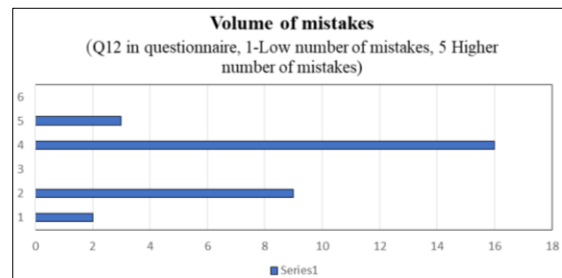


Fig 8: Volume of mistakes

4.8. Lower returns (low profits)

More defective products s discussed in 4.7 affects the high cost for Hammedia Group. Since the raw material and stitching cost incurred already, the company is burdened with high cost of

production. Company tries to maintain minimal cost level to generate profit.

5. Recommendations

Surprisingly, stress is not always a bad thing. It can stimulate creativity and productivity. According to Robert Ostermann, professor of psychology at FDU's Teaneck-Hackensack Campus, "No one reaches peak performance without being stressed, whether an athlete, an office worker or a manager." The natural pattern of human behavior is to experience a stress-causing event or situation, react to it with increased tension and then return to a normal, relaxed state. The problem occurs when stress is so overwhelming or constant that this pattern is broken. Further as displayed in Annexure 5-Theoretical model for Preventing Stress suggested for the company for their future planning. The management of Hameedias Group could recognize the talents of its employees and reward. Company can organize foreign tours, parties, team gatherings and various special occasions in order to reduce the stress level of the executives of the organization. This will be helpful in many ways to release stress of the employees. Apart from that, building social support is important. They have close connections with trustworthy peers who can listen to their problems and boost their confidence level. Then the Hameedias current practice of "open door policy" will be effective. Company could encourage a healthy lifestyle as having plenty of water, having healthy eating habits where the companies can organize health camps in educating the employees. We have evident with two employees of this mitigation style. Manager creative designing stated "I Drink a lot water and take a small break" and another Assistant manager said "If I'm on stress I joke, sing or listen to songs". Company can encourage such as above to their staff to mitigate their stress by not disturbing to the other employees (Annexure 3 Responses received for the questionnaire - Q13. Company could introduce the flexi hours to the employees which can be provide work life balance, increased commitment towards the organization and reduce stress as well. Currently Hameedia is paying overtime for team member level for working hours 7.45a.m. to 3.15p.m, there onwards overtime is paid. Hamedias' can restructure payment policy and included Executive level employees into the overtime payment category as it will have a motivational facot on Executives. Also Hameedias' can promote relaxation techniques such as yoga, listening music and meditation. This will support employees to reduce their stress level and to maintain a good working environment.

6. Conclusion

Stress is a widespread element experienced by employees around the globe. Stress has become major problem for Executives particularly at Hameedia where the employer doesn't realize the impact of stress on employee performance. According to the above analysis major reasons behind the stress can be found as; communication and motivation. Lack of communication gap and consultation with subordinates, Lack of communication and consultation with staff, No appreciation of work by people at work, No cooperation as a team, Lack of support by people at work, Being undervalued, Working environment, Staff problems,

Coping with new technology, information overloaded, short deadlines, having to work unsocial hours, having too much work to do.



Fig 9: Stress management

Even though employees are stressed, more than 50% of employees they are able manage it as stated above figure. "We have turned stress into enemy over the years. But there is something revolutionary you may not have tried yet. Making "Stress" your friend" (Archana Law, LMD, June 2017. According to the study on stress level of the executives in apparel sector in Sri Lanka, it can be concluded that every executive in the company confronts some kind of stress in any given situation. The main reason for the job stress is, they are working in the apparel sector which has more work pressure than the other industries. Dealing with the foreign/local customers and suppliers will cause them stressful environment. This study gives the message to the management of the companies to develop strategies to reduce the stress level of the employees where it consequently enhances the organizational performance. Stress if not well managed will affect companies performance (Nwokwu, Dharmadasa, & Rathnasingha, 2018; Nwokwu, Atapattu, & Azeez, 2019; Nwokwu, 2018; Nwokwu, Rathnasingha & Pradeep, 2019) [10, 8, 9, 7].

References

1. Fred Luthans. Organization behavior, 12th Edition, McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2013. Retrieved from https://bdpad.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/fred-luthans-organizational-behavior_-an-evidence-based-approach-twelfth-edition-mcgraw-hill_irwin-2010.pdf
2. Stephen P Robbins, Timothy A Judge. 12th Edition, McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2013.
3. Tennant C. Work-related Stress and Depressive Disorders, Journal of Psychosomatic Research. 2001; 51(5):697-704.
4. Alderfer CP. An Empirical Test of a New Theory of Human Needs. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance. 1969; 4(2):142-175.
5. Mihaela Seracin. Assessment of Work Stress Influence on Work Productivity in Romanian Companies. 2010; (92):420-425. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042813028267#>
6. Mosadeghrad A, Ferlie E, Rosenberg D. A Study of Relationship between Job Stress, Quality of Working Life and Turnover In tension Among Hospital Employees. Health Sery. Manage Res. 2011; 24(4):170-81. Available at: <http://www.nctinlm.nih.gov/pubmed/220409>

7. Nwokwu TC, Rathnasingha DLPM, Pradeep R. Corporate governance, board participation and firm performance of the listed companies in Nigeria. *Journal of Finance and Bank Management*. 2019; 7(1):7-16. <https://doi.org/10.15640/jfbm.v7n1a2>
8. Nwokwu TC, Atapattu AMCP, Azeez AA. The Impact of Board Members Involvement on Return on Equity (ROE). *Modern Economy*. 2019; 10:1334-1347. <https://doi.org/10.4236/me.2019.104090>
9. Nwokwu TC. The Influence of Board Involvement on Price Earning: Evidence from Nigeria. *International Journal of Recent Advances in Multidisciplinary Research*. 2018; 5(7):3967-3973. Retrieved from <http://www.ijramr.com/issue/influence-board-involvement-price-earning-evidence-nigeria>
10. Nwokwu TMP, Dharmadasa P, Rathnasingha DLMP. Board Involvement on Earnings Per Share (EPS): Evidence from A Developing Economy. *International Journal for Innovation Education and Research*. 2018; 6(5):130-141. Retrieved from <http://www.ijer.net/ijer/article/view/1031>
11. Robert S Bridger. Occupational stress and employee turnover, 2013. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00140139.2013.836251> Ng, D. M., and R. W. Jeffrey. 2003.
12. "Relationships between Perceived Stress and Health Behaviors in a Sample of Adults." *Health Psychology*. History of Hameedia. 2017; 22:6480-6642. Retrieved from ([www. Hameedia.lk](http://www.Hameedia.lk)).
13. Rebecca Maxon. Stress in the Workplace: A Costly Epidemic, 1999. retrieved from (<http://www.fdu.edu/newspubs/magazine/99su/stress.html>)