

Stress Management and Employee Counselling

In this recording we summarise the content of chapter 47 Stress Management and Employee Counselling.

Studying this chapter should help you define stress and list potential sources; distinguish three categories of stress symptom; explain what employers can do to help employees suffering from stress; propose steps an employer could take in order to minimise the possibility of harassment; .

Introducing the chapter, the authors start with 1. In this chapter we continue with HRM and the theme of employee performance, considering key factors that might reduce an employee's contribution at work. In particular we will focus on stress and related matters. Work associated stress-related illnesses lead to avoidable absences which can impact upon performance. They may also lead to expensive litigation, prosecution and substantial compensation damages. Furthermore, a poor reputation for welfare makes it harder for an organisation to recruit, retain and motivate employees.

2. The literature on the subject of stress at work is large. Stress and counselling are considered in both the HR and OB literature. The HR literature typically focuses on health, safety and welfare (Torrington et al 2009) or health and wellness management (Bratton and Gold, 2007) and performance or absence management, and the law. HR is also concerned with the impact of its health, safety and welfare reputation on other HR activities such as recruitment, selection, retention and development. The OB literature focuses on personality and stress (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2010, see also Martin, and Fellenz, 2010) or organizational change and stress management, (Robbins, Campbell and Judge, 2010). Others discuss stress in the context of conflict at work or in terms of the worklife balance (Mullins 2010). Increasingly, employers are paying greater attention than in the past to the effects of stress on their workers, especially on their key and talented managers.

3. Employers must consider common law, UK legislation and European Union directives and regulations when dealing with employees. They will consider legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), the EU's working time directive, the working time regulations (1998), the Protection from Harassment Act (1997) and civil law in particular. The employer has a duty of care over its employees and in recent years we have witnessed employers prosecuted for breaching this. Employers must be conscious of stressful working environments and the way they deal with their people. We consider the law in more detail in chapter 50. Aside from the legal obligations and the business arguments for performance management, there is now a general view in society that employers should take steps to prevent stress and stress related illnesses and promote healthy lifestyles in a more general sense.

4. In chapter 21 Para. seven we discussed the quality of working life movement. Quality of working life means an individual's overall assessment of satisfaction with their job, working conditions, pay, colleagues, management style, organization culture, worklife balance, and training, development and career opportunities. The Quality of working life movements emphasised programmes of organizational design and development dedicated to improving productivity and workers' retention and commitment by bettering the relationship between employers and employees and the work environment. Amongst the new challenges faced by HR is the need to help employees achieve a satisfactory worklife balance; allocation of time and commitment between work and personal life, which reflects the personal needs of the employee.

We start the chapter by defining what is meant by the term stress and then consider some of the ways stress may be caused. Next we outline some of the symptoms of stress and finally consider what the individual and the employer can do to help prevent and manage work related stress. Finally, we discuss counselling, in a stress context, as both a management skill and a specialist activity..

The key concepts discussed within this chapter are:

counselling - when a counsellor sees an employee in a private and confidential setting to explore a difficulty the employee is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction

with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose; Stress - The physical symptoms of ill-health caused by excessive pressures in the workplace or elsewhere and leading to reduced job performance; how far an individual succumbs to stress is determined mainly by personality, and the extent to which they are confident of their ability to overcome the pressures.; .

Other terms discussed include:

Challenge stressors; Discrimination; Harassment; Hindrance stressors; Type A and Type B personality profile; Work-life balance; .

Summarising and concluding, the author(s) make the following comments - 25. In this chapter we focussed on stress and related matters. Work associated stress-related illnesses lead to avoidable absences which can impact upon performance. They may also lead to expensive litigation, prosecution and substantial compensation damages. Furthermore, a poor reputation for welfare makes it harder for an organisation to recruit, retain and motivate employees. The Health and Safety Executive (2010) define work related stress as the process that arises where work demands of various types and combinations exceed the person's capacity and capability to cope. The main sources of stress at work are located in a number of groupings. They may arise from environmental factors, job and organisational factors (including the organisation culture), workplace relationships, domestic situation, or personality factors. Personality affects the degree to which people experience stress and how they cope with it. Symptoms of stress are typically analysed under three headings – physiological, psychological and behavioural. Strategies for coping with stress can best be analysed under two headings – personal strategies and organisational strategies. The HSE has designed the Management Standards approach to help employers manage the causes of work-related stress. It is based on the familiar 'Five steps to risk assessment' model, requiring management and staff to work together. Counselling aims to provide a supportive atmosphere which helps employees find their own solution to problems. The goals of counselling are to enable an individual to handle stress by making better use of their own strengths, insights and resolve. Essentially, counselling is a process in which the counsellor helps the client to: identify the problem, agree what would be the ideal, or preferred, outcome, and consider ways by which the client might achieve that outcome..

We have now reached the end of the chapter 'Stress Management and Employee Counselling'.

There are a number of references for this chapter where further reading opportunities are identified for you.

Additionally, there are questions or activities to help develop and test your understanding of this chapter