

COURSE: PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

LECTURE 10 :HEALTH AND SAFETY OF EMPLOYEES

LECTURER: DR LUCY KARIMI KIRIMA

Lecture learning outcomes:

At the end of the lecture, you will be able to:

1. Understand the concept of health and safety
2. Discuss to manage stress and nurture good physical and mental health
3. Understand What Employee Welfare and team spirit is

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF EMPLOYEES

Since large number of employees spend great deal of their time in workplace, their work environment is not always good for their healthy life. Stress, Strains, Mental and Psychological Conditions, Poor working conditions, long hours of work, Poor ventilation, Insanitation, Malnutrition etc spoil their health. Efficiency in workplace is possible only when an employee is healthy, on the other hand industry exposes workers to certain hazards which affect their health. The symptoms of bad health are high rate of absenteeism and turnover, industrial discontent and indiscipline, poor performance and low productivity. Modern industry is characterized by complicated mechanisms, intricate job requirements, and fast-moving production lines. One of the important consequences of all this is increased dangers to human life, for example through accidents. To avoid this safety programmes should be introduced, both for employers and employees benefit.

MEANING AND DEFINITION OF HEALTH

The W.H.O has defined health as —a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Industrial health refers to a system of public health and preventive medicine which is applicable to industrial concerns. According to the joint I.L.O/W.H.O Committee on organizational Health,

- Health, industrial health is the prevention and maintenance of physical, mental and social well being of workers in all occupations.
- Prevention among workers of ill health causes by the working conditions
- Protection of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health
- Placing and maintenance of worker in an occupational environment adapted to his physical and psychological occupation.

According to WHO (1995), occupational safety and health can be defined as a multidisciplinary activity aiming at:

- Protection and promotion of the health of workers by eliminating occupational factors and conditions hazardous to health and safety at work

- Enhancement of physical, mental and social well-being of workers and support for the development and maintenance of their working capacity, as well as professional and social development at work

- Development and promotion of sustainable work environments and work organizations

The ILO/WHO definition of occupational health is “The promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental social well- being of workers in all occupation” and the WHO considers occupational health service to be responsible for the total of worker and, if possible, his or her family.

As the definition indicates, the main focus in occupational health is on three different objectives:

- the maintenance and promotion of workers’ health and working capacity
- the improvement of work and working conditions so that they are conducive to safety and health
- the development of work organizations and preventive safety and health cultures in a direction that supports safety and health at work. Such development also promotes a positive social climate and enhances the smooth operation and possibly also the productivity of working enterprises. The term “culture” in this context means an environment reflecting the value systems adopted by the undertaking concerned. Such a culture is reflected in practice in the managerial systems, personnel policy, principles for participation, training policies and quality management of the undertaking.

Physical health and mental health

Physical health implies prevention of disease or health conservation and prevention of occupational disease. Health is the outcome of the interaction between the individual and his environment. Health not only depends on the employee but also on the environment. Efficiency in work is possible when the worker is healthy physically and mentally. Industries exposes employees to certain hazards which he would not meet elsewhere and which may affect his health. Physical and mental health both are essential for the satisfaction and improved morale, discipline, performance and productivity of the employees. In India, the Royal Commission on Labour (1931), the Labour Investigation Committee (1946), the Health Survey and Development committee (1943), the Labour Welfare Committee (1969) all emphasized upon the — creation and maintenance of an healthy environment as possible, in the homes of the people as well as in all places where they congregate for work, amusement or recreation are essential.

The physical health refers to infirmity in the employee’s health. Employee’s physical health and his work are intimately related. While an unhealthy employee works less both quantitatively and qualitatively, commits accidents, and remains absent from work, a healthy employee produces results opposite to these. The same underlines the need for and importance of healthy employees in an organisatio .

Mental health refers to the mental soundness of the employees. As is physical health important for good performance, so is mental health also. Experience suggests that three factors, namely, mental breakdowns, mental disturbances, and mental illness impair the mental health of employees.

Safety measures

Safety measures deals with prevention of accidents and with minimizing the resulting loss and damage to persons and property.

Five basic principles must govern the safety programme of an organisation.

1. Factors resulting to accidents have to be traced out, analysed and eliminated.
2. Identify potential hazards, provide effective safety facilities and equipment take prompt remedial action.
3. The top management must continuously monitor the safety performance.
4. Management and supervision must be fully accountable for safety performance in the work place.
5. All employees should be given thorough training in safe methods of work and should receive continuing education and guidance on eliminating safety hazards and on prevention of accidents

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress is a state of mind that show certain biochemical reactions in the human body and is projected by a sense of anxiety, tension, depression, frustration and irritation. Such reactions are caused when the demands of the environmental forces or internal forces are not met by the resources available to the person. Situations produce stress in the form of bio-chemical, functional and structural changes in the human organism. These situations could be fear, pain, fatigue, emotional arousal, humiliation, frustration, lack of concentration, blood pressure, drugs, loss of loved one, nonoccurrence of an expected event and even unexpected successes that require a change in the operational style. High level stress damages the physical and psychological well-being of a person and extremely low levels of stress are equally undesirable for they cause boredom, and result in lack of stimulation, innovation and challenges. Thus moderate level of stress is necessary for higher level of performance.

Meaning and Definition of Stress

The term —Stress refers to the body's physical, mental, and chemical reactions to circumstances that confuse, endanger, frighten or irritate the individual.

According to Hans Selye Stress is defined —as the nonspecific response of the body to any demand

Stress is a discrepancy between an employee's perceived state and desired state, when such a discrepancy is considered important by the employee.

Stress influences two behaviors –

- (1) the employee's psychological and physical well-being and
- (2) the employee's efforts to cope with the stress by preventing or reducing it.

S.P. Robbins, -says that Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important.

Sources of Stress

There are two sources of stress namely organizational sources and personal sources.

A) Organizational Sources

The extent and ratio of stress that people experience in job place are influenced by the following factors :

i. Nature of job

The nature of job itself can determine the type and degree of stress that can be induced. Some jobs lead to more stress-related responses than others. For example job of a police officer, or air traffic controller are often considered to be low- stress jobs. In general high stress occupations are those

in which the employees have little control over their operations, work under time constraints and have major responsibilities for human or financial resources.

Persons working under adverse working conditions such as temperature extremes, pollution, uncomfortable lighting and ventilation and loud noise are also vulnerable to high stress. According to a study, some of the high stress jobs are foreman, manager, inspector, waitress or waiter and clinical laboratory technician. On the contrary low stress jobs are college professor, personnel worker, craft worker, farm labourer etc.

ii. Role Ambiguity

Role is the set of activities associated with certain position in the organisation. When there is lot of uncertainty regarding job definitions or job expectations, then people experience role ambiguity. Role ambiguity is high in managerial jobs where responsibilities are more and role definitions and task specifications are not clear. Role ambiguity produce psychological strain and dissatisfaction, lead to under-utilization of human resources and leads to feeling of futility on how to cope with the organizational environment.

iii. Role Conflict

Role conflict occurs when two or more persons have different and sometimes opposing expectations of a given individual. Role conflicts occur when contradictory demands are at the same time placed before an employee. For example, a building contractor may ask a carpenter to do something which is different to what the city building code is, thus causing a role conflict. Similarly a father may know that his son has committed a crime but does not inform the police.

iv. Responsibilities assigned to employee's

Any type of responsibility can be a burden on an employee. Holding a person responsible for anything going wrong can create stress and it can be more if the manager has a limited degree of control over his subordinates.

v. Lack of Participation

When the employee's are allowed to participate in the decision making process of the organisation, the employee's develop high morale, work more efficiently and feel that they have control over the work environment thereby reducing the extent of role conflict and role ambiguity which are the causes of stress.

vi. Interpersonal Relations

The efficiency, performance and effectiveness of an organisation is mapped by the degree of relations that the people enjoy in the work place. Harmonious, cordial and congenial relations result in peace. When the interpersonal relations are poor there is stress, tension and anxiety. Under such crisis full situation the superior and subordinate relations keep deteriorating

B. Personal sources

i. Job concern

Job variables can become stressors when they become sources of concern, anxiety and frustration to a individual. Lack of job security, prospect of losing a job with family depending on the individual, job recession, low status of job, lack of career progress are all factors resulting into stress.

ii. Relocation

Transfers or promotions resulting into change of place geographically, disturbs the routine daily life of individual causing stress. Fear of working in a new place, unpredictability of the new work environment, anxiety due to fear of how to create new relations, getting away from spouse,

children, relatives or looking for new dwelling, school for children in new place can be the result of uncertainty and a cause of stress.

iii. Change of life structure

Structure of life and process of living has many facets like sociocultural factors like religion, race, education, family. As a person grows older responsibilities also grow up, and therefore stress develops. The extent of stress is also determined by the ability to cope with stress

Coping with stress

A. Organizational Strategies

1. Preventive management

Preventive management can be conducted by surveys and employee/group interviews. Managers can identify potential problems of serious stressors and take steps to reduce them

2. Maintaining a productive culture

Maintenance of positive organizational environment and satisfied employees sets the right direction.

3. Management by objectives

A management by objectives or similar performance appraisal technique that identifies employee goals, roles and responsibilities and strengthens communication can reduce stress by eliminating uncertainty in critical aspects of employees' jobs

4. Controlling the physical environment

Reducing stress in the physical environment requires that management undertake one or two different strategies. First by reducing noise, better control of temperature, second by protecting employees by improved safety equipment.

B. Personal Strategies

1. Meditation

Transcendental meditation gives mental and physical relaxation. Meditation reduces anxiety and improves work performance and gives job satisfaction.

2. Exercise

One of the least expensive and effective stress reduction strategies is exercise like jogging, sports, fitness classes, cycling, swimming etc. This improves mental and physical health.

3. Entertainment

Watching a favorite movie or listening to music can release stress

4. Removing the cause of stress

Sometimes one can easily check the cause of stress, for example, a confrontational supervisor, difficult support staff, no possibility for advancement etc. Thus the key is to reduce or lessen the cause.

5. seeking Counseling

Stress is a common psychological problem. Counselors can offer helpful insights and stress reduction techniques that may remove the problem.

Employee welfare

Employee welfare depends on overcoming personal crisis, family problems and workplace problems. Removal of these problems leads to healthy and more productive years of service to the employees. Organisations try number of approaches to address rising problems of the employees. One such approach is the establishment of **wellness programs**. Wellness is defined as a freely chosen lifestyle aimed at achieving and maintaining an individual's good health. Employee welfare programs can bring behavioral changes in employees. More broader and comprehensive approaches are adopted by organizations to solve problems of employees. Job security, Voluntary participation, Accessibility, Insurance coverage can boost the morale and efficiency of the employees.

IMPORTANCE OF SAFETY IN ORGANIZATION

1. It Saves Cost

Occurrence of an accident involves two types of costs: direct costs and indirect costs. The direct cost is in the form of compensation payable to the dependents of the victim employee, and medical expenses incurred in treating the patient employee if the accident is not fatal. However, the management has not to bear the direct cost if the victim.

The indirect costs, also called the 'hidden costs', include loss on account of down - time of operators, slowed -up production rate of other workers, materials spoiled, and damages to equipment. Added to these is the injured employee's work performance less than his normal efficiency. Research evidences indicate that the indirect costs are three to four times higher than the direct costs. But , the safety by avoiding accidents eliminates these direct and indirect costs .

2. It improves productivity

As safe conditions at the workplace keep employees free from worrying about their safety, they devote more time to improving the quantity and quality of their output. Thus, safety in the industry promotes productivity.

3. It develops moral

An industrial employee is a worker in the factory and at the same time, bread earner for his/her family. Hence, the happiness of his/her family is tagged to the well-being of the worker. Safety is, therefore, important on human grounds as well.

4. Safety is legal requirement

The maintenance of safety in the factory premises is a legal requirement for the industry . There are laws and acts for ensuring safety measures in the factory, and imposing penalties on non -compliance of the same has become quite severe . Given the benefits safety offers to an industrial establishment, as seen above, there is, therefore, a need for avoiding accidents. Adequate safety measures and precautions can avoid accident. The next section deals with the same .

5. Maintain and improve employee performance both quantitatively and qualitatively.

6. Reduce employee absenteeism and turnover.

7. Minimize industrial unrest and indiscipline.

8. Improve employee morale and motivation

Rights and Duties

All workers have rights. Workers, as well as employers and governments, must ensure that these rights are protected and must strive to establish and maintain decent working conditions and a decent working environment. More specifically: — work should take place in a safe and healthy working environment; — conditions of work should be consistent with workers' well-being and human dignity.

The responsibilities of governments, employers and workers should be seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing in the common task of promoting occupational safety and health to the greatest extent possible within the constraints of national conditions and practice.

Workers' rights

It is increasingly recognized that the protection of life and health at work is a fundamental workers', in other words, decent work implies safe work. Furthermore, workers have a duty to take care of their own safety, as well as the safety of anyone who might be affected by what they do or fail to do. This implies a right to adequate knowledge, and a right to stop work in the case of imminent danger to safety or health. In order to take care of their own safety and health, workers need to understand occupational risks and dangers. They should therefore be properly informed of hazards and adequately trained to carry out their tasks safely. To make progress in occupational safety and health within enterprises, workers and their representatives have to cooperate with employers, for example by participating in elaborating and implementing preventive programmes.

Employers' responsibilities

Because occupational hazards arise at the workplace, it is the responsibility of employers to ensure that the working environment is safe and healthy. This means that they must prevent, and protect workers from, occupational risks. But employers' responsibility goes further, entailing knowledge of occupational hazards and a commitment to ensure that management processes promote safety and health at work. For example, an awareness of safety and health implications should guide decisions on the choice of technology and on how work is organized. Training is one of the most important tasks to be carried out by employers. Workers need to know not only how to do their jobs, but also how to protect their lives and health and those of their co-workers while working. Within enterprises, managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring that workers are adequately trained for the work that they are expected to undertake. Such training should include information on the safety and health aspects of the work, and on ways to prevent or minimize exposure to hazards. On a larger scale, employers' organizations should instigate training and information programmes on the prevention and control of hazards, and protection against risks. Where necessary, employers must be in a position to deal with accidents and emergencies, including providing first-aid facilities. Adequate arrangements should also be made for compensation of work-related injuries and diseases, as well as for rehabilitation and to facilitate a prompt return to work. In short, the objective of preventive programmes should be to provide a safe and healthy environment that protects and promotes workers' health and their working capacity

Governments' duties

Governments are responsible for drawing up occupational safety and health policies and making sure that they are implemented. Policies will be reflected in legislation, and legislation must be

enforced. But legislation cannot cover all workplace risks, and it may also be advisable to address occupational safety and health issues by means of collective agreements reached between the social partners. Policies are more likely to be supported and implemented if employers and workers, through their respective organizations, have had a hand in drawing them up. This is regardless of whether they are in the form of laws, regulations, codes or collective agreements.

The competent authority should issue and periodically review regulations or codes of practice; instigate research to identify hazards and to find ways of overcoming them; provide information and advice to employers and workers; and take specific measures to avoid catastrophes where potential risks are high.

The occupational safety and health policy should include provisions for the establishment, operation and progressive extension of occupational health services. The competent authority should supervise and advise on the implementation of a workers' health surveillance system, which should be linked with programmes to prevent accident and disease and to protect and promote workers' health at both enterprise and national levels. The information provided by surveillance will show whether occupational safety and health standards are being implemented, and where more needs to be done to safeguard workers.

Questions

1. Give the importance of industrial health. Explain how safety measures can help in reducing industrial accidents.
2. Explain in detail the physiological, psychological and behavioural responses to stress.
3. What are the personal factors that contribute to stress? Would this stress be reduced if employees were made more responsible for their own activities? Support your reasons.

References

- Handbook of HR Management practice, Armstrong M, Kogan, London, 10th Edition, 2008
- Human Resource Contemporary Perspective, Beard Well Ian & Hlen, Prentice Hall London, 2008
- Human Resource Management, Legge Karen, Palgrave Macmillan London, 1995. Managing Human Resources, Molaner C, London, Routledge, 1994
- Human Resource Management, Chandra, M, Chadawada Engineering College, 2018-2019
- Introduction to HRM, Stredwick, J, British Cataloguing in Publication Data, 2005
- Human Resource Management, Guru Jambheshwar University, Hisar-125001
- Human Resource Management, Smt. Shyamala etl, Calicut University, Computer Section, SDE, 2014
- Human Resource and Personnel Management, Aswathapa, McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Ltd., New Delhi, 2008
- Human Resource Management*, Biswajeet Pattanayak, Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2001
- Human Resource Management*, Lloyed L. Byers and Leslie W. Rue (5th edition), The McGraw-Hill Companies, USA, 1997.
- Michael Armstrong (1999), *A Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice* (7th edition), Michael Armstrong, Kogan Page Limited, 120 Pentonville Road, London, 1999
- Mamoria C.B., Gankar S.V. "A Textbook of Human Resource Management", Himalaya Publishing House, New Delhi, (2006)
- Dwivedi R.S., "Personnel Management in Indian Enterprises", Galgotia Publishing Company, New Delhi (1997)

Devid A. Decenzo, Stephen P. Robbins, "Personnel/Human Resource Management", Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi (2002)

Prasad L.M., Human Resource Management," Sultan Chand & Sons, New Delhi (2005)

Dessler Gary, "Personnel Management", Prentice Hall International Editions, New Jersey (2001)

Carrell Michael R., Elbert Norbert F., Hatfield Robert D., "Human Resource Management, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey,(1999)

Mamoria C.B., Rao, VSP, Personnal Management (Text and cases), Himalays Publishing, Mumbai(2012)