Effect Procrastination on Work-Related Stress

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Abstract

The changes in the nature of job, working environment and organizational behavior would undoubtedly increase the occupational stress of the workers. Work-related stress is a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within the people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning. Effective management of work-related stress can be achieved under two conditions. First, the individual worker must be able to recognize stressors and understand their consequences and second, organizations must develop stress prevention, as well as stress reduction techniques. One of the factors which increase work-related stress is procrastination. Procrastination considers a self-handicapping behavior that leads to wasted time, poor performance, and increased stress. While procrastination can have different effects on organizational and individual effectiveness, it is imperative for managers to identify the various causes and reasons for procrastination and plan to overcome them. This study is recommended using an experimentally one so that relation between individual's procrastination and work-related stress can be analyzed in order to determine if the findings will be duplicated.

Keywords: Stress, work-related stress, procrastination

1. Introduction

Stress is an essential part of life. The changes in the nature of job, working environment and organizational behavior would undoubtedly increase the occupational stress of the workers, which in turn affects worker's physical and mental health.

The salience of work-related stress as a research topic is due in part to the magnitude of its effects. In addition to being associated with a variety of physical diseases, high levels of work-related stress can have a negative effect on emotional well-being (Brewer & Mahan-Landers, 2003). Work-related stress is the response people may experience when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope (Australian Safety and Compensation Council, 2008).

Work-related stress has usually a main influence on individual and organization issues. Individual issues include behavioral, mental, and physical outcomes and organizational issues include the decrease of performance, job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Therefore, to

identification of the sources of stress as understanding the factors that contribute to work-related stress is necessary for improving stress management program in the organization. One of the main sources is procrastination that many organizations neglect of it.

Procrastination makes the individuals postpone responsibilities, duties, and decisions (Dilmac, 2009). Procrastination appears to be a troubling phenomenon. People most strongly characterize it as being bad, harmful, and foolish. Justifying this viewpoint, several studies have linked it to individual performance, with the procrastinator performing more poorly overall, and to individual well-being, with the procrastinator being more miserable in the long term. At larger levels of analysis, procrastination has been linked to several organizational and societal issues (Steel, 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate work-related stress and procrastination briefly before study how procrastination effects on work-related stress.

2. Work-Related Stress

Researchers cannot agree on a single definition for stress due to its complex nature (Salami, et al. 2010). Stress usually defines as the reaction of individuals to demands (stressors) imposed upon them (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). Stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs the worker (Maxwell, 2004). Robbins (2001) defines stress as a dynamic condition in which the 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.

Also, Beehr and Newman (1978) define work-related stress as a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within the people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning (Salami, et al. 2010). The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (1999) defines stress as: 'The harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, needs of the worker' (Palmer, ET AL. 2004).

Stress has both positive and negative aspects which may lead to either achievement or towards harmful effects (Abushaikha & Sheil, 2006). Positive stress may result in stimulating and enhancing work performance. Excessive stress may result in negative effects and hence affect the worker's health and work performance. This directly affects the company's performance. A small amount of stress may positively encourage workers to work harder. An excessive stress may result in negative effect (Salleh, et al. 2008).

In general, work-related stress is a growing problem that results in substantial costs to individual employees and work organizations around the globe (Hart & Cooper, 2001). Work-related stress can also impact employee productivity through increased absenteeism; imposing a direct economic cost on employers (Australian Safety and Compensation Council, 2008), voluntary turnover in the organizations (Zhang & Lee, 2011), and burnout (Salami, 2002).

In addition, there are many sources of work-related stress in organization such as new technology (Rahmani, 2009), unfair evaluation, lack of job security, unpleasant colleague, lack of managers' support, high workload, procrastination and so on.

Cooper and Marshall's five sources of stress, with examples of the components of these sources given for each, are:

1) Intrinsic to the job, including factors such as poor physical working conditions, work overload or time pressures;
2) Role in the organization, including role ambiguity and role conflict;
3) Career development, including lack of job security and under/over promotion;
4) Relationships at work, including poor relationships with your boss or colleagues, an extreme component of which is bullying in the workplace; and
5) Organizational structure and climate, including little involvement in decision-making and office politics (Johnson, et al. 2005).

Accordingly, to identify the mentioned sources of stress is a vital duty of management to decline its outcomes.

3. Procrastination

Research in procrastination is extensive and extremely varied. Generally, researchers study procrastination as self-regulation failure (Morford, 2008). There are five different subtitles about procrastination, such as 1- general procrastination, 2- academic procrastination, 3- decision-making procrastination, 4- neurotic procrastination, 5- nonfunctional Procrastination. It is commonly seen that the procrastination includes actions and behaviors that affect the fruitfulness of the individual in a negative way (Balkis & Duru, 2009).

Popoola (2005) considers procrastination as a dispositional trait which has cognitive, behavioral and emotional components (Akinsola, 2007: 364). Milgram (1991) proposes that procrastination is primarily: 1) a behavior sequence of postponement; 2) resulting in a substandard behavioral product; 3) involving a task that is perceived by the procrastinator as being important to perform; and 4) resulting in a state of emotional upset.

Procrastination defines as avoidance of the implementation of an intention, frustrates an individual's stated purposes by simply putting it off until it's too late or nearly too late. The high threshold for certainty needed before acting on a choice leads to taking longer to complete the task and to seeking more information about alternatives (Zimberoff & Hartman, 2001).

Chu and Choi (2005) distinguish between two sorts of procrastination behaviors. Passive procrastinators are paralyzed by their indecision and as a result fail to complete tasks on time, so this is certainly an unfavorable behavior. However, active procrastinators prefer to work under pressure and make deliberate decisions to procrastinate tasks, nevertheless, they usually complete their tasks on time (Gafni & Ger, 2010).

In 1987, Lay distinguishes the optimistic procrastinator and the pessimistic procrastinator. Optimistic procrastinators put of their intentions but do not worry about it. They are confident that they will succeed in the end, regardless of their engagement in the intended action now or later. Moreover, they overestimate their progress and their chances to succeed and underestimate the time needed to achieve their goal. In contrast, pessimistic procrastinators do worry about their dilatory behavior. They are aware of the fact that they get behind schedule. Nevertheless, they still procrastinate because they do not know how to deal with the task. They feel incompetent and are afraid that their involvement in the task will prove their incompetence. Therefore, they procrastinate to avoid unpleasant experiences (Dewitte &Lens, 2000).

In sum, a major difference between the two types might be their degree of adaptiveness. Although procrastination in general seems to be related to several psychopathological symptoms, this link might be due primarily to pessimistic procrastinators and much less to optimistic procrastinators, who seem to manage their problems reasonably well (Dewitte &Lens, 2000).

Solomon & Rothblum (1984) identify 13 factors to procrastination as following:

1) evaluation anxiety, 2) perfectionism, 3) difficulty making decisions, 4) dependency and help-seeking, 5) aversiveness of the task and low frustration tolerance, 6) lack of self-confidence, 7) laziness, 8) lack of assertion, 9) fear of success, 10) tendency to feel overwhelmed and poorly manage time, 11) rebellion against control, 12) risk-taking, and 13) peer influence. Finally, they create seven factors with factor loadings ranging from 0.56 to 0.98. They include fear of failure, aversiveness of task, difficulty making decisions, dependency, lack of assertion, risk-taking, rebellion against control (Binder, 2000). These factors consider as dimensions of procrastination.

4. Effect Procrastination on Work-Related Stress

According to Holt (1990), effective management of work-related stress can only be achieved under two conditions. First, the individual worker must be able to recognize stressors and understand their

consequences and second, organizations must develop stress prevention, as well as stress reduction techniques (Salami, et al. 2010). One technique to reduce stress in workplace is to make less procrastination among employees.

It is believed that procrastination and delay breeds stress (Ingram, 2007). Procrastination is the postponement of a task which needs to be accomplished. It is a chronic habit of illegitimately justifying to oneself that a task does not, should not or cannot be started now (Ekundayo, et al. 2010). According to researchers, procrastination has unfavorable effects on organizations. One of its effect is work-related stress (Ekundayo, et al. 2010). Procrastination considers a self-handicapping behavior that leads to wasted time, poor performance, and increased stress (Chu & Choi, 2005).

Investigators such as Ferrari (2001) often depict procrastinators as lazy or self-indulgent individuals who are unable to self-regulate. In contrast, non-procrastination associate with high efficiency, productivity, and superior performance, and non-procrastinators are often described as organized and highly motivated individuals (Chu & Choi, 2005). Procrastination also correlates with low need for cognition, low self esteem as a decision maker, high hyper vigilance, and high buck-passing (Zimberoff & Hartman, D., 2001).

Ajayi (2007) posit that procrastinators are always found of making some statements like 'I work best under pressure'; 'the day is still young'; 'there is still more time to do the job'. He submit that procrastination may occur as a result of poor utilization, lack of concentration, fear and anxiety, personal problems among others (Ekundayo, et al. 2010).

On the other hand, Ferrari and Emmons (1995) find that procrastinator delay task completion because they believe they lack the ability to achieve a task successively. While Popoola (2005) further asserts that an individual postpones doing things that make him or her anxious, apprehensive, or likely to lose face in the presence of peers (Akinsola, 2007). Certainly, it can produce high stress in workplace, as Steffy and Jones (1990) believe that the most important effects on stress are anxiety, depression and procrastination (Pathak, 2011).

Although there are little research about procrastination and work-related stress within organizations, Tice and Baumeister (1997) confirm their relationship among university students. They find the university students who had high procrastination experience high stress. In addition, Holloway (2003) surveys the effect procrastination and stress on individuals' behavior health. He find that the procrastinators have an external stress when they place under time constraint. This stress causes to negative effect on safety system. Decreasing health also leads to high level of stress and procrastination.

In addition, McCown and Roberts (1993) find a significant number of students believe their procrastination interfere with their academic performance and increase their feelings of stress. Similarly, Pychyl (1995) shows that doctoral students' academic procrastination produced negative affect including guilt, anxiety, and stress (Binder, 2000: 20).

So, the studies show all dimensions of procrastination include fear of failure, aversiveness of task, difficulty making decisions, dependency, lack of assertion, risk-taking, and rebellion against control are sources which raise work-related stress among employees.

5. Conclusion

Work-related stress is one of the most important workplace health risks for employees in developed and developing countries (Mansoor, et al. 2011: 50). Steffy and Jones (1990) noted that job-related stress can cause job-related dissatisfaction, which is itself, the single most obvious psychological effect of stress such as tension, anxiety, depression, aggression, irritability, confusion, boredom and procrastination (Patak, 2011). Although, Stress cannot be taken out of work but it can be recognized and reduced. Procrastination as a main source to work-related stress can take away from workplace.

Unfortunately, many organizations victimize "time" and postpone the duties. Avoidance of procrastination has advantages as following:

- People perform essential and main duties;

- Individuals' abilities to do right work increase;
- Individuals' stress decrease and their self-confidence increase; and
- They use "time" as well (Kave & Fayazi, 2009).

In addition, Saltz (2004) suggests the ideas on how to overcome procrastination, such as set priorities, recognize self-defeating motives, modify goal of perfection, discipline yourself, be a positive role model, and change old habits step by step (Van Wyk, 2004).

While procrastination can have different effects on organizational and individual effectiveness, managers should identify its reasons and try to reduce this destructive behavior among employees. They should consider to the factors such as fear of failure, aversiveness of task, difficulty making decisions, dependency, lacking of assertion, risk-taking, and rebellion against control among employees and try to remove them.

Therefore, it is imperative for managers to identify the various causes and reasons for procrastination and plan to overcome them by disciplining themselves on how best to use time wisely, set priorities and perform their duties according to schedule so as to always meet deadlines.

The study is recommended using an experimentally one so that individual's procrastination and work-related stress can be analyzed in order to determine if the findings will be duplicated. Also, managers should succinctly incline procrastination in workforce by different ways for overcome work-related stress.

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