

The Ever Immanent Work-Related Stress Problems- Addressing From Corporate Responsibility and Regulated Competition Perspectives

1. Dr. B.M. Harshavardhan, 2. Dr. Ayatham Prasad,

1. Professor of MBA, KLU Business School, KL. University, Guntur- Andhra Pradesh, India
bmharshavardhan@yahoo.com or harshavardhan_mba@klce.ac.in

2. Associate Professor, University Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India, ayathamprasad@yahoo.co.in

ABSTRACT

Employees, as one of the most important stakeholder-classes of an enterprise, deserve utmost attention from employers' side. But, mockingly, it is the employee class that usually comes as the first avenue of hope of employers / entrepreneurs when they embark upon a cost reducing review. Employers or their agents may find their positions to be plausible from the perspective of competition or other motives. But the scapegoat is often the employee-class. This resulted in the immanent burden imposed upon employees in the form of intensified work load giving rise to a myriad of self-reported work-related stress complaints and injuries. Such a grave phenomenon seems to have eluded the attention of employers or their agents, world over. Though a few advanced countries, such as the European and the USA, already made some progress in implementing remedial measures, many developing countries appear to be falling short of even recognizing the peril. The article focuses on remedial measures from the rationale of CSR and regulated competition.

Keywords: *work-stress-preemption-regulated competition-stakeholders-work intensification*

Introduction

Every organization works in an ambience of aspirations and expectations of people from different quarters, called stakeholders, who look to management / employers from their individual perspectives. Employers or their agents occupy a fiduciary status as regards these stakeholders and are responsible for reconciling their divergent interests, acting within the framework of the law. One of the chief stakeholder classes of a business is the Employee Class. The significance of this class for a business or an enterprise, to be successful, is not beyond one's comprehension. "Employees make significant personal investments into the corporations they work for, but employees' interests are of rare concern to directors." (Puri & Poonam 2002). Puri and Poonam contend that human capital theory is superior and employees are an important

stakeholder group in modern corporations because employees are investors of human capital with corporate expectations equivalent to those of shareholders who invest financial capital. According to the National Opinion Survey commissioned by National Consumers League and Fleishman-Hillard International Communications, one in two Americans believe that the most important proof of corporate social responsibility is treating employees well (June 2006)¹. According to Andrew Winston (2008), "Employees are the make-or-break stakeholders - ignite their passion and your organization will accomplish a great deal." As these arguments go this way, if one argues that machines do everything for businesses, the reality is that it is men who run the machines. Hence it requires the utmost attention of employers/top management that they take up the responsibility of identifying the elements or factors, which pose a threat or

injury to this class of stakeholders and take strategic steps for achieving what is called employee well-being.

O A Ohmann (1955) believes that bread alone will not satisfy workers. He contends, "... ... the central problem is not the division of spoils as organized labour would have us believe. Raising the price of prostitution does not make it the equivalent of love." He rather convicts that the dissatisfaction of the workforce is indeed the expression of hunger for a work life that has meaning in terms of higher and more enduring spiritual values. Therefore he identifies a need for a spiritual re-birth and a new religion. Ohmann appears to have discovered this abnormality as early as fifties. If this were translated in terms of the modern order, it could mean that mere paying well and extracting work beyond capacity and encroaching into the personal time of the employees is not the right order. A kind of work policy that balances the work and personal life is what the need of the hour is.

STRESS – DEFINED

Stress is defined by The Health & Safety Executive² as "the adverse reaction people have, to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them." It follows that work environment is an embodiment of elements like pressure, demands upon the employees, etc., which drive the workers to the extent of reacting negatively towards work. It is not to say that the work place should be something like a haven. A minimum amount of challenge is required to sustain motivation and activeness at work. But it should not look like a place of torment.

CAUSES OF WORK-RELATED STRESS

FIGURE 1 around here

Work-related stress could be traced to a variety of factors. Figure 1 shows that the factors are not independent and that they are of multi-level nature too, generating intermediary factors, which spur the direct factors that ultimately generate stress. Thus, a stressing factor is generated by a remote cause through intermediary causes. From Figure

1, a gradient of factors in three stages is apparent. The first stage factors are labeled Generic Factors, which include

- i. Competition
- ii. Globalization
- iii. Preemptive drive
- iv. Greed for supernormal profits
- v. Upstart growth objective
- vi. Behavioural anomalies

Competition became and remains to be indispensable. This factor keeps the executive or entrepreneur on toes. **Globalization** has instigated hitherto complacent businesses to catch up with the pace of outlandish businesses, particularly those of advanced nations and it is believed that in case they slack, they might not be seen on the world business map any more. **Preemptive drive** puts a business on tenter hooks as it is self-propelled to lie on the innovative spree to keep ahead of the competitors. It tries to grab the opportunity before anybody else could do. The Businesses with **Greed for super normal** profit have cost cutting as their golden principle to be adopted in every strategy they design. **Up-start growth objective** is another factor of the first stage. Some Businessmen / industrialists / entrepreneurs aspire to build Rome in one day! Their programmes and strategies are drafted keeping this object in view leading to extortion on the part of employees. **Behavioural anomalies** of superiors and peers include bullying, mobbing, etc.

The second stage is labeled Organizational Response which encompasses factors such as:

- i. Organizational restructuring
- ii. Downsizing
- iii. Job redesign
- iv. Result orientation drive

Organizational restructuring entails a thorough review of the existing structure not only to bring organizational efficiency, but also to

locate possible job positions for elimination. This may quite often preclude the doctrines of job design that call for consideration of human capabilities – mental and physical, ergonomics, leeway to break uninterrupted engagement on work, so on and so forth. Downsizing is a deliberate attempt to minimize staff in view of automation. In countries where supply of manpower is not a constraint, **downsizing** is not a healthy option. Such act is intended to save on the wage bill and employee cost. **Job redesign** is another implement used by the employers or their agents in order to minimize the workforce. Job redesign is not an uncommon feature in organizations. It is an ongoing process. As employees gain efficiency, they can discharge a greater amount of work. However, it may be noted that job design does not mean combining or grouping together of activities that are not logically connected. Say, for example, there are instances where a receptionist (whose job is to handle telephone calls and regulate the flow of visitors) is given some clerical work also and put to blame when a visitor barges into the chamber of the officer at the time when the reception is disturbed from his / her seat for attending some clerical work involving, for instance, taking a computer print in a different section. This is common in Indian work environment. Another example could be something like professors and teaching staff in educational institutions, being charged with additional duties of the nature of administration which is incompatible with teaching and research and making them accountable for all types of work. This too is a commonplace in the Indian scenario. The result is that teaching and research are getting only the fox's share of time and attention of the faculty. **Result-orientation drive** is another important factor of stress. It is common to hear the ruthless slogans of management such as 'do or die,' 'publish or perish,' so on and so forth. Such extortionate targets naturally sustain stress among the employees. **Lack of suitable measures to curb bullying and such other unwarranted behavior** as a factor creates opportunity for such

elements to thrive at work place. The second stage, being the embodiment of organizational responses to the first stage impulses, gives rise to the third stage factors which describe the management-intended changed work environment such as the following:

- i. Increased demands of work
- ii. Extended working hours
- iii. Intensified work
- iv. Expedition of work
- v. Non availability of leave
- vi. Job insecurity
- vii. Work–life conflict
- viii. Prevalence of bullying

These aspects are discussed in subsequent sections. These factors of the III stage lead to the undesirable stage, the EFFECT (IV STAGE), which is nothing but the stressed condition of the workers. From this stage, the workers are brought to the V stage, named, (THE UGLY) MANIFESTATIONS OF STRESS, which describes all kinds of ill effects of stress. These have Physical, Physiological, psychological, individual and organizational implications as detailed in Figure 1. The common symptoms are as follow:

The rising intensification of work triggers stress (Brendan J. Burchell et al. 2001). Table 1 represents the results of Amicus's3 biennial surveys, which show the extent to which each factor contributes to stress. The table portrays comparison of data of biennial surveys of the years 1998, 2000, and 2004, conducted by Amicus (union). The criteria of survey are the various factors of stress. The responses against each criterion are expressed in percentage. The factors taken are: workloads, cuts in staff, change, long hours, bullying, shift work, cramped working conditions and sexual and racial harassment. One finds from the table that the gravest complaint is 'workload' throughout the period (79% in 2004). The next significant four are: cuts in staff (49% in

2004), change (49% in 2004), long hours (37% in 2004), and bullying (27% in 2004). On the whole, 'workload' factor response is found to be increasing throughout the period; 'cuts in staff' dwindled in intensity marginally; 'change' is almost static; "long hours" complaint soared significantly with marginal decline in 2004. "Sexual or racial harassment", of course, which is at the minimum of 5 per cent during 1998, came dwindling to 3 per cent during 2004. Nevertheless, they are prevalent.

TABLE 1 around here

The various factors can be grouped broadly under the following heads:

- i. Work intensification
- ii. Bullying at work and Mobbing
- iii. Clash between work and personal life

Work intensification

Work intensification may be defined as a self-reported expression of increased workload - presumably ascribed to managerial policy changes in response to macro-economic changes and radical policy changes of a nation - rising to such a level that an average worker finds the job to be ultra vires his or her physical and/or mental energies.

The foremost reason for work intensification could be the self-imposed pressure on the part of employers / top management of organizations for either retaining or aggrandizing their current positions in the market, or due one or more of the factors mentioned under Stage I reflected in Figure 1. Such pressure is forced down the echelons in the organizations. One of the means of achieving this end for businesses is reducing the operating cost by downsizing the staff, which means that the amount of work done by a certain number of employees earlier is now to be carried out by a reduced number of employees, resulting in work intensification. The urge for being competitive stems from changes in global economic policies, which, in turn, necessitate individual nations to revise their economic

policies such as, how several developing countries resorted to integrate their once protected economies with the global economy. Apart from this, the onslaught of information technology has brought in a new kind of health problem (George David Garson 1995, Arnetz & Bengt B.1996). Employees who are constantly wedded to their computers for longer durations are being exposed to radiation.

Other reason could be the increasing labour cost, which drives employers to over-employ workers / executives. Mr. Narayanamurthy, the chief of Infosys Technologies Ltd., has been quoted in the live telecast by NDTV on 26th May 2011 at 10-00 p.m. IST as having contended that employing workers on extended hours would only lead to fatigue and thereby committing of more mistakes and an additional time is required to rectify them leading ultimately to loss of productivity. This argument went against the testimony of Ratan Tata, who is stated to have opined that Indian work ethics (working on extended hours) is better than that of the European countries in terms of working hours (as the Europeans Close work from Friday afternoon). Another reason (usually associated with middle and top-level executives or those given performance bench marks) could be the self imposed tension, driven by the intrinsic motives such as personal image or personal prestige purported to be at stake if excellence at work were not demonstrated (Cary Lynn Cooper 2005).

By and large, work intensification is a result of indiscriminate job design, pursued by over-ambitious employers or their agents.

This is evident from the fact that, the pace of work has become faster not only in the healthcare sector (Landsbergis, P. A.,1988), but also in other sectors like primary education in many parts of the world. According to a survey in England, Scotland and Wales (Brendan J. Burchell, et al.1999) there has been a marked increase in intensity of work since 1994. 64 per cent of respondents reported that speed of work increased and 61 per cent reported that effort increased over the five year

period preceding 1999. Another survey (Isik Urla Zeytinoglu et al. 1999) on home health care, conducted around the same period, reveals alarming observations. Table 2 presents the situation.

TABLE 2 around here

The survey is conducted on a sample of 775 workers and executives in Home Health Care sector in Canada. The types of responses/complaints are as follow: 62 per cent complain that work is heavier; 87 per cent complain that there is pressure to do more with less time. 86 per cent complain that client visits are shorter; 69 per cent complain that the job is more complex; 66 per cent complain that they do not have enough time to provide emotional support to clients; and a 42 per cent complain that the amount of unpaid work they do increased. Helen Lingard (2004) reports that workloads in construction industry in Australia are notoriously high and work hours are long and rigid and often involving significant amounts of unpaid overtime for professionals. Lingard's study finds that engineers reported an increase in the amount of work by 63 per cent, pace of work by 62 per cent, and the amount of stress by 52 per cent. Conflict is another known work stressor supposed to have been experienced by construction professionals. In case of China, the increased incidence of FDI flow led to violation of local Chinese Laws concerning work conditions and treatment of employees, and native ethics (Jeremy B. Fox et al. 2005). Common with knowledge-based organizations, it is contended that employers value the workers who spend long hours at work. The reason being that there are, by and large, no clear-cut criteria of performance, and hours worked is taken as evidence of output and commitment to work (Kate Kellog 2002). This survey also reveals that about a half of staff complain as to a significant amount of their time having been spent dealing with crises: and such unexpected demands of managers make it difficult for them to finish their work during their regular office hours. This is evidenced by the

remark of a respondent under the afore-cited survey, being, "I almost always take work home and work on most weekends. I'm not sure how much longer I can continue at this pace!" The fact of work intensification is well demonstrated by the results of the survey conducted on home health care employees including key decision makers in Canada by Isik Urla Zeytinoglu et al. (1999).

1. Another example is the tragic incident in which a Japanese police constable stabs himself for relief from work as he had been required to work longer hours continuously over the preceding two months. (The Hindu, daily, dated 5th June 2007). Besides this, a police constable in Hyderabad (India) shot his top officer dead, a DIG of the Central Reserve Police Force, for reportedly denying sanction of leave (The Hindu, daily, dated 1st February 2008). These testimonies establish far beyond doubt the pervasion of this malaise. Studies reveal that police departments are most common places where stress is virulent. (Jihong "Solomon" Zhao, Ni He et al, 2002)

Bullying at work and Mobbing

Lexically speaking, bullying means, frightening or hurting a weaker person or a group. In the context of work situation, bullying could take the forms of teasing, vituperation of bosses or threatening of loss of job or organizational violence, calling names, sarcasm, etc. Mobbing means, forming a crowd around someone to attack him or her. (Renato Gilioli et al. 2003). It is reported that bullying at work is a big contributor to stress (Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf, et al., 2002) and that bullying costs Britain up to two billion pounds in terms of lost revenue every year and nearly half a million people experience work-related stress to such levels that they suffer serious health problems with a financial cost to the society estimated to be £ 3.8 billion.

A survey conducted in 2002 over seven different countries, namely, Brazil, Bulgaria, South Africa, Thailand, Portugal, Lebanon and Australia as regards bullying (comprehensive - data provided in Table 4) finds that the highest level of bullying is registered by Bulgaria with

30.9 per cent, followed by Portugal with 23 per cent (in health centre complex) and the least offender is Australia with just ten per cent. But, in case of verbal abuse it is Australia, which ranks first (Table 5), followed by South Africa with 52 per cent and the lowest offender is Bulgaria with 32.2 per cent.

TABLES 4 and 5 around here

Another study, the Third European Survey on Working Conditions 2000, conducted on members of European Union, brought out interesting findings. Table 6 represents the levels of intimidation workers are subjected to in each member country. Finland ranks first with fifteen per cent, followed by the Netherlands and the UK, each with 14 per cent intensity and the least offenders are Italy and Portugal with just four per cent intensity. However, the average of European Union members is just nine per cent. The sector-wise analysis is laid down in Table 7.

TABLE 7 around here

The highest degree is registered by public administration and defense sector with fourteen per cent. The next rankers are three, namely, transportation and communications, hotels and restaurants, and education and defense sectors with twelve per cent intensity each. The least offenders are agriculture and fishing sectors, electricity, gas and water supply sectors with just three per cent intensity each.

Bullying is found to be affecting not only the person experiencing it, but those witnessing it also, according to Cary Cooper (Professor, Organizational Psychology, Lancaster University). The 'National ban Bullying at Work Day' campaign of the UK Charity (7th November of every year) seems to have brought significant awareness among the British 28.94 million work force.

Clash between work and personal life

Work became so demanding that the worker/employee finds himself /herself pinned down at workplace and he or she is so self-constrained that exigencies at home are simply

forgotten and are not recollected until meeting the spouse or children at home in the evening or at night. The most common exigencies as reported by various employees during personal interviews held by the authors are: taking the sick parent, spouse or child to a clinic or hospital; shopping a specific book prescribed by the teacher of the school going child; purchasing provisions for home; taking home a technician for repairing fridge/AC machine/washing machine or any other appliance, the non-functioning of which disrupts the normal life; booking for cooking gas refill (since most part of India is still continuing with gas bottle replenishment); attending important social gatherings, receiving and accompanying out-station relatives or friends who come to the city/town on important errands, or attending close relative's marriage (and failure to do so on account of work pressure or non-sanction of leave by the employer would most probably lead to misunderstanding or strained relations of the incumbent with his/her relatives) or umpteen other such exigencies.

Bailyn et al. (1997) call this factor, 'an unexpected connection' that links personal lives and strategic issues. The authors suggest a three-step approach to addressing this malaise such as:

1. View work from the perspective of personal life,
2. Identify ways to change work practices to improve effectiveness and enhance work and personal life and
3. Implement work-practice improvements.

Google.com has been in news during 2006 and 2007 as a successful employer as the company went a long way in integrating work and personal life. Similar attempts are being made in India by some leading IT companies by employing certain courier boys who attend upon personal errands of other employees such as remittance of telephone/electricity bills, (usage of electronic transfer mechanism has not penetrated deep into the society for valid reasons) compliance with statutory requirements, etc. This is just not

enough. Work should not encroach into personal life domain (e.g., taking work home or working on holidays). But this became a commonplace.

ILL EFFECTS OF WORK-RELATED STRESS

The current study identifies primarily three types of undesirable effects of the way work is designed or the way workers are treated at work place, being, physiological disorders, psychological disorders and job aversion to work. Others include lost working days, attenuated innovative potential of employees, etc.

There are adequate empirical evidences to establish the fact that workers are suffering from physiological and psychological disorders. Table 3 provides statistics on this aspect pertaining to the period between, 1990 and 2005/06. These are the results of the study conducted by Health and Safety Executive, UK. The results are none but tabulated complaints of Self-reported Work-related Illness (SWI 05/06) under the survey on British work force (England and wales). The results are drawn along three types of complaints, namely, (i) All illness, (ii) Musculoskeletal disorders and (iii) Stress and related conditions. The data, as observed over the period (1990 through 1995, 1998/99, 2001/02, 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06) indicate a gradual decline in number of complaints as regards all illness, as well as the complaints concerning musculoskeletal disorders, but for the year 1995, where the complaints rose by about 30 per cent. However, it is observed that, though the number of complaints shows a declining trend, complaints do exist glaringly as to be reckoned. But in the case of complaints about stress and related conditions, the number more than doubled during 2001/02 since 1993 and then attenuated gradually, but only marginally, till 2005/06 to indicate immanence of the bad element.

The psychological disorders may be described in terms of work-related stress, depression or anxiety. Such disorders are supposed to be resulting in an estimated 10.5 million lost working days each year in Britain and

a 28.5 million working days (1.2 days per worker) lost during 2009-10 (The Health and Safety Executive Statistics 2009/10).

Another survey (Appleton K, et al, 1998) on general practitioners in Leeds brings out that, out of 285 respondents, 148 (52%) reported high level of psychological symptoms and 160 (56%) reported that work had affected their recent physical health. The study also found existence of association among the scores on level of psychological disorders, physical disorders and job satisfaction levels with several aspects of work load, including list size, number of sessions worked per week, amount of time spent on call (visiting clients' homes) and use of deputizing services. On the qualitative aspect of the survey, it is reported that the general practitioners complained of "over work and excessive hours, paper work and administration, prior changes in National Health Service (NHS), and the 1990 General Practitioners' contract to be the most stressful aspects of their work."⁴

A heartening observation, according to Psychological Working Conditions (PWC) 5 survey, is that one in six of all working individuals in Britain finds his/her work to be extremely stressful. As regards age and sex distribution, most of the complainants of self-reported work-related stress, depression and anxiety fall under the age group of 34 -54 years, as reported by both occupational physicians and psychiatrists. When it comes to gender dichotomy, it is males who succumb more to psychological problems, whereas, more females succumb to occupational health problems.

According to the survey SWI 0405 of the HSE, there is a high prevalence of incidence of such cases in industry, public administration and defense, education, health and social work, and financial intermediation. The Surveillance Scheme (monitoring schemes of HSE) data also indicate similar pattern in the incidence of such cases. The groups, which report more of this ill, comprise medical practitioners, prison officers, police officers, UK armed forces personnel,

scientific researchers and managers of hospitals and hotels. As regards occupation-/industry-wise distribution of incidence of such cases, it is reported that teachers and nurses have the highest prevalence rates of work-related stress-driven problems. Among teachers, those connected with primary education and nursery sections are more prone to such disorders as compared with their counterparts in secondary education divisions. All these data suggest that the system is far from perfectness and hence needs serious endeavour towards redressal.

OTHER ILL-EFFECTS OF WORK INTENSIFICATION

Influence on innovative potential

Work intensification is also found to have links with the quality of work that is discharged by employees. Amabile (1996) establishes that work intensification leads to poor business outcome as it tends to reduce the innovative potential of employees. She identifies task structure, work practices, evaluation and reward system as influencers of creative behaviour of an employee. Amabile's contention (1998) is that creativity depends upon three components, i.e., expertise, creative thinking skills and intrinsic motivation. She observes that workload pressure undermines creativity if such pressure is perceived as an externally imposed means of control.

WAYS AND MEANS OF VANQUISHING THESE PROBLEMS

Since this undesirable situation is work-related, and it is 'management' which designs and assigns work to employees, the onus of attenuating or eliminating the evil, by and large, rests on the management itself. If the management resolves to eliminate or attenuate the severity of the ill effects, it does so, not merely for the sake of eliminating it or for complying with statutory requirements! It does so to reap a bundle of benefits such as:

i. Unleashing innovative potential of

employees as they will have enough time to do,

- ii. Reduced or minimized work-related stress-generated health problems,
- iii. Increased human productivity,
- iv. Reduced staff turnover,
- v. Customer satisfaction through increased workers' commitment,
- vi. Reduced or no cost of prosecution/litigation arising out of physical/mental injuries,
- vii. Reduced loss of man-hours due to reduced sickness absenteeism,
- viii. Augmented sense of belonging among employees,
- ix. Achievement of Employee Well-being,
- x. Boosted image and repute of organization resulting from the above etc.

Some suggested initiatives

Employers/top executives may pay heed to the clues listed below that their task is simplified.

- i. Establish a Health & Safety Committee at corporate level,
- ii. The company/organization has to identify all factors of stress at work place and conduct risk assessment to eliminate stress or control the risks arising out of stress. These risk assessments shall be reviewed regularly,
- iii. The company shall consult with trade union safety representatives on all proposed actions relating to prevention of work place stress,
- iv. The company shall provide training for all managers and supervisory staff along good management practices, including subjects like bullying, rational task assignment and treatment of subordinates,
- v. The company shall provide confidential counseling for staff affected by stress, caused by either work or external factors and
- vi. The company shall provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement

the company's agreed stress management strategy.

SUGGESTIONS

- i. Since employers/their agents have long been seared of the HR issues and problems, there is likelihood that a graver dimension as this could be overlooked or treated as a routine HR issue. Hence, it is suggested that the issue be viewed not only from HR angle, but from corporate responsibility perspective also, as it is already testified that employee class occupies the foremost position among the various corporate stakeholder classes.
- ii. As regards keeping employees overtime, due consideration shall be given to Narayana muthy's and Amabile's stances, discussed above, wherein, Narayanamurthy warned of loss of productivity due to fatigue stemming from extended hours of work, and Amabile warns of loss of innovation potential.
- iii. As regards bullying, calling names at workplace is a ubiquitous feature. It is suggested that refined methods be adopted to ensure efficiency or commitment of employees rather than abusing employees since the system itself may promote mistakes of employees.
- iv. If employers or their agents point to competition as the why and wherefore of all these ills, it is suggested that business / enterprises form industry-/sector-wide associations and draft out a code of governance including work norms and standards besides prescribing punitive measures for violation. If one wants to reduce cost to compete with the other, by exploiting employees, there will be no end to this order.
- v. Suggested that company-level committees be constituted comprising representatives from employees at all levels of management, exclusively charged with the responsibility of framing suitable policies and implementing and reviewing the same.
- vi. Recommended that the statutory authorities concerned or various associations launch training programmes for employers, and the employers in turn organize training programmes for executives to train along how they should assign work and treat their subordinates.
- vii. Work must be viewed from the personal life perspective also and aptly designed. Employees must be allowed to include personal errands (so long as they do not dominate the organizational agenda) in their daily agenda of work.
- viii. Nevertheless, the *causa proxima* for all these ills is something else! Yes, the greed for pre-emption is seen in the form of competition. Nobody negates competition because, being competitive is the prerogative of every citizen or every business. But even this dimension also has got limits like any other thing. Hence, what is required is, allowing competition to operate in a regulated manner. Under the existing set up, individuals or businesses are in a race for pre-emption by either toiling themselves or subjecting the employees to toil over extended hours or subjecting them to a great amount of pressure as is witnessed in the instances cited above. If the fear that "others will gain advantage if I do not do it first" were eliminated, all these problems would be nowhere! Eliminating such a fear does not mean precluding competitors. In the absence of a competitor, one is expected to pursue one's objectives at normal pace with least tension. For example, if completion of a particular project takes one month under normal working pace, the project manager sets a target to finish the same in a fortnight on the logic that if he would not do so, his competitor would do it and win the edge. But in reality, what have we achieved over all these centuries in the name of technology and development? Destruction of the ecosystem, puncturing of the ozone layer, extinction of certain species, cancer, tumors and impotency through radiation of

the web of internet and cell phone towers, global warming etc. – are these our achievements? Do we call it development? Now, the solution lies in regulating the pace of the competitor. What’s the modus operandi? As businesses have begun claiming themselves to be socially responsible, the initiative must be mooted at their level, say, industry-wise and industry-wide associations of each country such as Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and CII must come together to discuss and evolve sound work norms, including the dimensions like maximum number of hours an employee could be engaged at work giving due consideration for his/her personal life, the manner in which subordinates could be treated or assigned of work, and draft out a charter providing for punitive measures against infringing employers/bosses.

The only shortcoming might be (as some may argue) the purported marginal decline in the GDP of the country due to reduced pace of working. If some amount of belief were reserved towards this conundrum, heads of businesses world over could mobilize organizing ministerial conferences at UN level and do the same exercise suggested above so that no country would be a loser by adhering to the mutually agreed norms. One might wonder as to the possibility of achieving this end. Are there not many antecedents, wherein countries got chastised under UN machinery over various issues? Was WTO agreement not a success, at least to significant extent? When such complicated issues themselves got resolved through UN machinery, is the achievement of this solemn proposal far from being possible? Normal work pace involving least stress! versus pain of stress and its deleterious effects on health, and family wreckages due to isolation from home! – which is preferable? Have we been born only to toil and toil till death?

ix. Let us let man live life!

CONCLUSION

This study, however, finds that the stress problems at work are unabatedly continuing to exist. Any measure such as formation of internal committees on health and safety suggested above may lead to a temporary solace, but not a lasting solution. It follows that it is the causa proxima that needs to be addressed, i.e., the unduly excessive competition. It could be done through regulating competition by taking up this issue at the UNO level. This may look strange. But is there other go? Though achieving a solution is not that easy, it would be unpardonable to delay any further on justification, saying, “is it practical!,” and remain complacent allowing the damage to continue. Even a great journey begins with a single step.

FIGURES AND TABLES

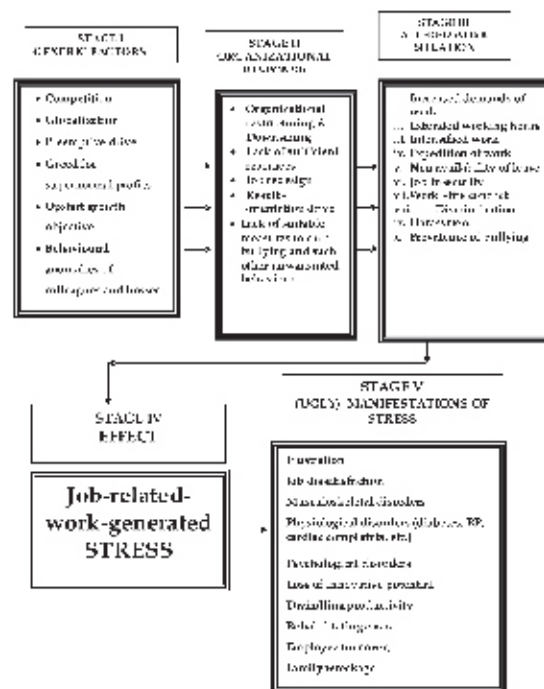


Figure 1: The Cause and effect of stress paradigm

Source: Designed by the authors

Table 1**Factors linked to overwork or stress**

FACTOR	PROBLEM ISSUES 2004 SURVEY	PROBLEM ISSUES 2002 SURVEY	PROBLEM ISSUES 2000 SURVEY	PROBLEM ISSUES 1998 SURVEY
Workloads	79%	80%	74%	60%
Cuts in staff	49%	50%	53%	60%
Change	47%	52%	44%	no equivalent
Long hours	37%	41%	39%	28%
Bullying	27%	28%	30%	21%
Shiftwork	22%	22%	30%	22%
Cramped working conditions	17%	19%	16%	14%
Redundancies	14%	12%	17%	15%
Sex or racial harassment	3%	4%	6%	5%

Source: Biennial survey of Amicus at <http://www.amicustheunion.org/pdf/HSEStressStandardsGuidance.pdf>

Table 2**Types of work-related complaints and workers' responses**

COMPLAINT	NO. OF RESPONSES	PER CENTAGE 1999	PER CENTAGE 1997
• My work is heavier	484	62	38
• There is pressure to do more with less time	676	87	86
• The amount of unpaid work I do increased	327	42	42
• My job is more complex	538	69	70
• Home care workers make more visits	440	56	56
• Client visits are shorter	667	86	84
• I do not have time to provide emotional support clients	517	66	65

Source: Costructed by the author based on the results of the study conducted by Isik Urla zeytinoglu, et al, at <http://list.waikato.ac.nz/ipermail/prir-1/1999July/001989.html>

Table 3

SWI 05/06 - Comparison of estimated 1990, 1995, 1998/99, 2001/02, 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06 prevalence and rates of self-reported illness caused or made worse by work, by type of complaint, for people working in the last 12 months in England and Wales

Type of complaint	Year	Sample cases	Estimated prevalence (thousands)			Rate per 100 000 employed in last 12 months		
			central	95% C.I.		central	95% C.I.	
				Lower	Upper		lower	upper
All illnesses	1990	2900	1510	1453	1566	5900	5700	6200
	1995	940	1596	1488	1703	6300	5900	6700
	1998/99	2662	1225	1178	1273	4700	4500	4900
	2001/02	2783	1296	1246	1346	5000	4800	5200
	2003/04	2435	1237	1186	1287	4700	4500	4900
	2004/05	2143	1120	1071	1169	4200	4100	4400
	2005/06	1937	1058	1009	1106	4000	3800	4200
Musculo skeletal disorders #	1990	1342	699	660	737	2800	2600	2900
	1995	544	916	835	997	3600	3300	4000
	1998/99	1146	524	493	555	2000	1900	2100
	2001/02	1231	571	539	604	2200	2100	2300
	2003/04	1134	573	538	607	2200	2100	2300
	2004/05	990	518	485	551	2000	1800	2100
	2005/06	939	509	476	543	1900	1800	2000
Stress and related conditions	1990*	399	207	186	228	820	730	900
	1995	168	268	226	311	1100	900	1200
	1998/99+	931	431	403	459	1600	1500	1800
	2001/02+	958	445	416	474	1700	1600	1800
	2003/04+	847	433	403	463	1600	1500	1800
	2004/05+	762	397	368	426	1500	1400	1600

Source : HSE at www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/tables/0506/swit5.htm updated ON 28-02-2007

Description of symbols:

- i. # Bone, joint or muscle problems are referred to as musculoskeletal disorders.
- ii. * Includes hypertension, heart disease and strokes
- iii. + Includes heart disease/attack, other circulatory system.
- iv. 95% C.I.: 95% confidence interval, the range within which we are 95% confident that the true value lies in the absence of bias.

Table 4**Bullying And Mobbing In Some Countries**

COUNTRY	EXTENT OF BULLYING (%)
BULGARIA	30.9
SOUTH AFRICA	20.6
THAILAND	10.7
PORTUGAL	23 in health centre complex 16.5 in hospital
LEBANON	22.1
AUSTRALIA	10.5
BRAZIL	15.2

Source: Table constructed by the author based on data provided in ILO/ICN/WHO/PSI, Synthesis report by V. Di Martino (2002)

Table 5**Psychological Violence - Verbal Abuse In Some Countries**

COUNTRY	EXTENT OF VERBAL ABUSE (%)
BRAZIL	39.5
BULGARIA	32.2
SOUTHAFRICA	52 PSUs
THAILAND	47.7
PORTUGAL	51 health centre complex; 27.7 hospital
LEBANON	40.9
AUSTRALIA	67

Source: Table constructed by the author based on data provided in ILO/ICN/WHO/PSI, Synthesis report by V. Di Martino (2002)

Table 6**Workers Subjected To Intimidation – EU Scenario**

SN	COUNTRY	PER CENTAGE
1.	Finland	15
2.	Netherlands	14
3.	United kingdom	14
4.	Spain	12
5.	Bulgaria	11
6.	France	10
7.	Ireland	10
8.	Denmark	8
9.	Dotschland	7
10.	Lithuania	7
11.	Austria	6
12.	Estonia	5
13.	Ellada	5
14.	Italy	4
15.	Portugal	4
16.	European union	9

Source: Paoli P, Merllie D. (2001) , Third European Survey on Working Conditions 2000, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin, Protecting Workers' Health Series No.4, © World Health Organization 2003. (bar chart, converted into table by the author)

Table 7**SECTOR-WISE LEVEL OF INTIMIDATION OF WORKERS – EU SCENARIO**

SN	SECTOR	PRCENTAGE
1.	Agriculture and fishing	3
2.	Electricity, gas and water supply	3
3.	Construction	5
4.	Financial intermediation	5
5.	Manufacturing and mining	6
6.	Real estate	7
7.	Wholesale and retail trade	9
8.	Transportation an communications	12
9.	Hotels and restaurants	12
10.	Education and health	12
11.	Public administration and defense	14
12.	All European Union nations	9

Source: Paoli P, Merllie D. (2001) , Third European Survey on Working Conditions 2000, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin, Protecting Workers' Health Series No.4, © World Health Organization 2003. (bar chart, converted into table by the author)

NOTES

1. Corporate Citizenship News, Newsletter June 2006, Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship at www.bccccc.net/index
2. The Health and Safety Commission is responsible for health and safety regulations in Great Britain. The Health and Safety Executive and local government are the enforcing authorities who work in support of the commission.
3. Amicus, Amicus and T&G members have voted to merge to create Britain and Ireland's newest and biggest trade union with around two million members.
4. AIDS to General Practice, By Michael G. Mead http://books.google.co.in/books?id=phJT7GxKCJQC&pg=PA128&ots=r5T8J-I5hc&dq=general+practitioners+contract+1990+the+clauses&sig=a6E-Ub_yzbnmCGx79krhO2at_j0
5. Psychological and Working Conditions surveys conducted at HSE

REFERENCES

1. Amabile, T. 1996. Creativity in context: Update to The Social Psychology of Creativity. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
2. Amabile, T. 1998. 'How To Kill Creativity.' Harvard Business Review [September-October]: 77-87.
3. Andrew Winston. 2008. Employees: Your Most Important Stakeholders, http://www.sustainablelifemedia.com/content/feature/strategy/employees_your_most_important_stakeholders
4. Arnetz Bengt, B. 1996. 'Techno-Stress: A Prospective Psychophysiological Study of the Impact of a Controlled Stress-Reduction Program in Advanced Telecommunication Systems Design Work.' Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine, (January) 38(1):. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins. 53-65
5. Brendan, J. Burchell, Diana Day, Maria Hudson, David Ladipo, Roy Mankelow, Jane, P. Nolan, Hannah Reed, Ines, C. Wichert and Frank Wilkinson. 1999. Job insecurity and work intensification: Flexibility and the changing boundaries of work, Routledge, UK, p 71.
6. Cary Lynn Cooper. 2005. Handbook of Stress Medicine and Health. Second Edition, 131-154. London: CRC Press
7. George David Garson. 1995. Computer Technology and Social Issues. Idea Group Inc. 168,169. Hershey, PA 17033, USA
8. Helen Lingard. 2004. 'Work and Family Sources of Burnout in the Australian Engineering Profession: Comparison of Respondents in Dual- and Single-Earner Couples, Parents, and Non-parents.' Journal Of Construction Engineering And Management, March/April, ©ASCE, 290.
9. Helge Hoel, Dieter Zapf, Cary L Cooper. 2002. "Workplace bullying and stress", Vol. Iss: 2, pp.293 – 333, Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
10. HSE home page www.hse.gov.uk/
11. Isik Urla Zeytinoglu, Margaret Denton, Sharon Davies. 2002. 'The Impact Of Work Intensification on Workers' Health In Home Health Care.' Proceedings of the Work Intensity Conference (Paris) 21-22 November 2002 in Paris.
12. Jeremy, B., Fox, Joan, M. Donohue and Jinpei Wu. 2005. Journal of Business Ethic, Springer, Netherlands, Volume 56, Number 4 (February). 317-324.
13. Jihong "Solomon" Zhao, Ni He, Nicholas Lovrich. 2002. Predicting Five Dimensions of Police Officer Stress: Looking More Deeply Into Organizational Settings for Sources of Police Stress, Police Quarterly, vol. 5 no. 1, pp. 43-62
14. K Appleton, A. House, and A. Dowell. 1998. 'A survey of job satisfaction, sources of stress

and psychological symptoms among general practitioners in Leeds.' *British Journal of General Practice*, [March]; 48(428), 1059–1063.

15. Kate Kellog. APRIL 2002. at CGO INSIGHTS, No. 11, When Less is More: Exploring the Relationship Between Employee Workload and Innovation Potential, at http://www.simmons.edu/som/docscenters/insights_11. Simmons College 300 The Fenway Boston, MA 02115 617-521-2669
16. Landsbergis, P. A. 1988. Occupational stress among health care workers: A test of the job demands-control model, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 9: 217–239. doi: 10.1002/job.4030090303
17. Lotte Bailyn, Joyce, K. Fletcher and Deborah Kolb. 1997. 'Unexpected Connections: Considering Employees' Personal Lives Can Revitalize Your Business.' *MIT Sloan Management Review*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 11–19
18. O. A. Ohmann. 1955. 'Skyhooks - with special implications for Monday through Friday.' *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3 [Mar-June], 1-10
19. SWI 05/06 [www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/tables/0506/swit5.htm]
20. *The Hindu*, daily, 5, June 2007, 'Policeman Stabs Self.' p 20.
21. *The Hindu*, daily, 1, February 2008. 'CRPF officer shot dead by constable.' p. 1.
22. *The Health and Safety Executive Statistics* 2009/10

Dr. B M Harshavardhan is a doctorate in CSR, under faculty of MBA, Andhra University and is now, Professor in K L University. He has 26 years of experience of teaching at PG level, and industry as Marketing Executive and Manager Admn. in Andhra Pradesh. He has published four journal papers (of which, one is international one) and two articles in edited books bearing ISBN. Presented a paper at a UGC-sponsored seminar. Member of AMA, the USA, AIMA, New Delhi, and IACSIT, Singapore bmharshavardhan@yahoo.com bmharshavardhan_mba@klce.ac.in



Dr. Ayatham Prasad, MBA M.Phil. Ph.D. is and associate professor in Andhra University department of humanities and social sciences. He has got 18 years of teaching experience at PG level. He published 17 articles of which, one is international. He presented 6 conference papers and executed one UGC sponsored mini-project. E-mail: ayathamprasad@yahoo.co.in

AUTHORS' PROFILE

