

Original article

WORK INDUCED STRESS AMONG MEDICAL REPRESENTATIVES IN AURANGABAD CITY, MAHARASHTRA

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: As there is a boom in pharmaceutical industry nowadays, the need for the Medical representatives is also increasing simultaneously. The pressure of achieving targets is resulting into the work induced stress among medical representatives.**Objective:** To assess the work induced stress and various factors responsible for it and also to evaluate some of the health consequences.**Method:** To achieve the purpose of work, data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire which was distributed to the medical representatives (n=100) by the principal investigator. The survey was carried in the city of Aurangabad during August to October 2012. Data were entered into SPSS (version 17) & analyzed using descriptive statistics.**Result:** Almost 66% of medical representatives were under pressure & were having some form of stress. Main reasons found were dissatisfaction with job profile (60%) & working hours (63%), continuous pressure for improved performance (73%) and conflicting demands between work & home (78%).**Conclusion:** There is significant amount of work induced stress among medical representatives. It is creating many health hazards. Unless work induced stress among medical representatives is recognized and reduced they will remain on the brim of getting many health consequences.**Keywords:** Work induced stress; Medical Representatives; Job satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

According to Hungarian scientist Hans Selye, stress reflects an undesirable state of chronic fatigue, worry frustration and inability to cope (bad stress or distress) ¹. He looked it as a "non-specific" response of the organism to any demand for change ². Signs of stress can be observed by people's behavior, peculiarly when changes occur in their behavior ³.

Job stress is defined as harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of a job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker ⁴. Unclear work or conflicting roles and boundaries can cause stress as well as lack of promotion, lack of training, job insecurity were also some of the persisting stressful condition ⁵. According to the WHO definition, health refers to the "a state of wellbeing in which the individual is able to work productively and fruitfully ⁶. A healthy working

environment is one in which there is not only absence of harmful condition but an abundance of health promoting ones⁷.

Medical representatives were mainly involved in the sales promotion of the drugs and this is the reason that they had to undergo many stressed condition. It is evident by a research that Medical representatives were at increased risk of ill health due to the nature of their work⁸. Previous researches also indicated that Medical representatives were exposed to long working hours, prolonged driving and manual handling of the promotional materials⁹. One of the studies confirms the noticeable responsible factors like unsupportive colleagues, work overload & continuous pressure for improved performance¹⁰.

The present study tries to capture the prevalence of various factors responsible for the existence of the job induced stress along with the associated health consequences and also the level of stress among Medical representatives.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Study Design: This study was a descriptive cross-sectional study carried out during August to October 2012

Sample selection & study tool: Pharmaceutical companies were categorized into multinational, Indian and local propaganda companies. Twenty medical representatives from multinational, 40 from Indian and 35 from local companies were included in the study. Thus for the feasibility of study total hundred medical representatives were interviewed. It was observed that medical representatives from various divisions of companies participate in the study. All the subjects were educationally well qualified. Investigator requested the Medical representatives to fill in the self-administered questionnaire at the time of vis-a-vis session. The questionnaire was pre-tested and then used. Completion of the questionnaire was voluntary. The time taken by the Medical representatives for filling in the questionnaire was around 25 minutes.

The questionnaire consists of four parts. First part is all about the socio-demographic characteristics. Second part tried to assess the job induced stress with the help of Work-Stress questionnaire¹¹ & the third part was to capture some of the factors responsible for the job induced stress among Medical representatives and lastly the

fourth part tried to explore the some physical and emotional responses.

The work-stress questionnaire consist of 15 statement with five alternative responses e.g. 5 for 'nearly all the time', 4 for 'often', 3 for 'some-time', 2 for 'seldom', 1 for 'never'. Total score on this scale is considered for the assessment of work stress (minimum & maximum scores were 15 & 75 respectively). More the stress on this scale indicates more stress. Factors for job induced stress capture by the small set of close ended questions. The physical and emotional responses explored by the list of 30 sign & symptoms, the subject had to tick these symptoms according to their understanding. These sign & symptoms selected from the list of 50 common signs and symptoms of stress given by The American Institute of Stress¹².

Statistical Analysis: The data has been entered into the SPSS (version 17th) and analyzed using the descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

Profile of medical representatives

As shown in table 1, most of the Medical representatives were in 25-29 years of age i.e. 60 % followed by 20-24 yrs (36%) and 4% were from >30 years of age. Almost all of the subjects were male as this is the mainly male oriented job, so sample could not able to catch the female subjects. Around 57% of the subjects were unmarried and 43% were married. Mostly Medical representatives were having educational background of science 72% followed by commerce 20% and then arts 8%. Regarding the educational level 49 % were graduates followed by the post graduates i.e. 41% and then diplomas 10%. Majority of them (39 %) were having work experience of less than 2 years. 30 % were having work experience of 2-4 years followed by 17% having experience of 4-6 years, then person who had experience >6 years only contributing 14%.

About 53% of the Medical representatives had taken up job with their interest. In spite of this 60% of the subjects were not satisfied with their job profile. The main reasons for the dissatisfaction among subjects regarding their job were found to be unpleasant task (82 %). 77% said that they had insecurity for their job, 75% found their job profile has lack of variety, inadequate incentives is about 75%, 72% said that they had to stay away from their home so that's why they were

not satisfied with their job followed by 70% found their job profile of low social value, 67% said they had to travel a lot, 67% said that they had unclear /unfair performance system, 65% found lack of opportunity for promotion.

Sixty percent Medical representatives were working for 5-10 hours followed by 37% were working for 10-15 hours and remaining 3% were working for less than 5 hours, as the length of the working hours seems to be quite less still 63% of Medical representatives were not satisfied with

their job working hours. About 95% of Medical representatives said that the main reason for dissatisfaction with their working hours is because they don't get time to spend with family, followed by long & unsocial working hours 86%, they were not getting their meals at regular times about 80% had this problem. The other reasons were found to be strict & inflexible working hours (77%) and 75% said that because of unpredictable working hours they were not satisfied.

Table 1: Profile of medical representatives and stress score (n=100)

Profile	Medical representatives	mean score \pm S.D.	p value
Age group			
20-24	36	56 \pm 10.5	0.09
25-29	60	58 \pm 11.4	
>30	4	46 \pm 1.5	
Marital status			
Married	43	62 \pm 11.3	0.06
Unmarried	57	58 \pm 9.6	
Education level			
Diploma holder	10	40 \pm 8	0.09
Graduate	49	45 \pm 9.8	
Post-graduate	41	48 \pm 12.6	
Experience in years			
<2yrs	39	67 \pm 8	<0.01 significant
2-4yrs	30	49 \pm 4.66	
4-6yrs	17	38 \pm 2.78	
>6yrs	14	30 \pm 2.13	

About 73% of Medical representatives were feeling continuous pressure from their managers to improving their performance. 78% of subjects were experiencing conflicting demands between their work and home. Because Medical representatives had to visit various hospitals, clinics & dispensaries about 72% of the subjects said that they were more prone to acquire different kind of infections.

According to the work stress questionnaire majority i.e. 55% of the Medical representatives were scored between 46-60 which interprets that they were often feel under pressure and out of control and they were likely to feeling some form of the stress. The difference in the stress score for the age, marital status and educational level of medical representatives was not found statistically significant. But as far as the experience is considered, difference in the stress score was found statistically significant as shown in table 1.

Various physical and emotional responses for job induced stress by subjects, were captured and depicted in table 2.

Table 2: Physical/emotional responses to stress in medical representatives (n=100)

Physical/emotional response	Medical Representatives
Don't sleep well	66
Muscle pain	47
Frequent headache	47
Restlessness	43
Anxiety/worry/guilt/ nervousness	37
Hair loss	36
Excessive sweating	32
Increased no of minor accidents	31
Stomach pain	30
Wake-up tired	30

DISCUSSION

The present study extends extensive empirical support for the notion that Medical representatives were not satisfied with their nature of job, they don't found it comfortable. The tasks which they were performing in their job were not agreeable to their senses & mind, which is further can be relate to various aspects of physical and mental health conditions resulting into the perceived psychological job induced stress.

Findings of the present study were dealing with the relationship of stress with the various job related factors, which suggests that Medical representatives were tensed about their job insecurity, although they were working hard there were no good policies for the incentives and promotion, there job is interfering in their personal life and they were facing continuous pressure for improved performance. These findings extend support to the earlier studies that Medical representatives were suffering from stress mainly because of the inadequate incentives, conflicting demands between personal and professional life and also pressure to improve performance¹⁰.

Findings also reveal that they had to leave their family & stay away from the home which also results in lack of concentration in their work and the poor performance in job. Most of the people were earning good money inspite of this their job is considered as a work of low social value which leads to kind of emotional stress.

Above study also shows that severity of stress is same irrespective of age, marital status or educational status of medical representatives. It was observed in this study that with experience stress handling becomes easier.

There is no such policies regarding their travelling and they had to travel a lot which increase the accidental risk while travelling, which is also previously supported by a study according to which Medical representatives were more prone to accidents⁸. They had to work a lot because of which they were getting very less time to spend with their family and friends which is an important reason that they get stressed with their job. Eventually the inflexibility and unpredictability of the working hours synergize those conditions in which subjects were not able to get their meals regularly which leads to various adverse affects on their health and emotional status further leads to stress because of their poor health. Overall the finding suggest that existence of the various factors of dissatisfaction regarding their job profile, working hours and working environment reflecting that Medical representatives were more prone to had job induced stress.

Finding of the present study also support to the notion that, the score levels of stress were at higher side but not the highest ones, so we can say that their stress levels were reached up to some alarmingly levels if these levels were not checked at this point of time then there is a chance that health & emotional consequences of

their job stress will get worse and their stress levels will be difficult to control. The aforesaid conclusion is previously supported by many studies which reflect that presence of high levels of stress may lead to many negative physical and psychological health consequences^{13,14,15,16}.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the Medical representatives were under pressure and they were facing work induced stress. At this present time many major changes are being imposed on the Medical representative's job and it is unclear if the profession is able to adequately deal with these changes. Any development in the nature of job profile and working hours need to be considered in the context of the well being of the Medical representatives who implement, and were affected by the changes. Further research is necessary to delve deeper into the various reasons for work induced stress and the solutions which could be applied to meliorating work induced stress in Medical representatives.

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