

STRESS SYMPTOMS EXPERIENCED AND STRESS-COPING ACTIONS TAKEN BY EMPLOYEES OF SAU

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ABSTRACT

Out of four State Agricultural Universities of Gujarat, two SAUs namely Anand Agricultural University and Junagadh Agricultural University were purposively selected. The present study was conducted with 160 teaching cadre employees (research and extension staff) from both the universities. The 40 respondents from cadre-I employees on the post of Professor and Associate Professor and 40 respondents from cadre-II employees on the post of Assistant Professor from each university were selected randomly. The results revealed that most experienced stress symptoms were increased consumption of tobacco, headaches / migraine, exhaustion, aches and pains, change in appetite, erratic moods, poor sleep pattern and indigestion. While major stress coping actions taken by the employees of SAUs to overcome the stress were positive thinking / learn to make compromise with every situation, planning in advance, time management, seeking social support from friends, family members, physical exercise, prayer / meditation, involving in hobby like music listening and watching T.V.

Keywords : stress symptoms, stress coping action, job stress, occupational stress

INTRODUCTION

State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) with their mandates of agricultural education, research, and extension hold much significance for agricultural development of the state. To be effective in mandatory work, it is essential to have better performance from its employees; but many-a-time, performance of employees is affected by stress which they feel in their job and it might be exhibited through different symptoms (Patel, 2010). This investigation would be helpful to identify the stress symptoms and stress level (particularly job stress) of the employees (research and extension staff) of different cadres in the SAUs. Thus, the results would be of immense help to the university authority to plan out the ways and means so that the job stress of the employees can be mitigated to enhance their performance in organizational interest. Thus, the study holds much significance in chalking out the policy to take corrective measures at appropriate level to mitigate the undesirable stress level of the employees in order to improve their performance so that organizational effectiveness can be increased. In this context, it becomes interesting and worthy to study the stress symptoms experienced by employees and what actions do they take to cope up with that stress situation. Keeping all of these things in view, the study carried out with the following specific objectives:

OBJECTIVES

- (1) To study the stress symptoms experienced by employees of SAUs of Gujarat state
- (2) To study the stress coping actions taken by employees of SAUs of Gujarat state

METHODOLOGY

For this investigation, out of four SAUs of Gujarat, two SAUs namely Anand Agricultural University and Junagadh Agricultural University were purposively selected and for selection of employees, teaching cadre employees (research and extension staff) were taken into consideration. From each of these two universities, 40 respondents from the cadre-I employees on the post of Professor and Associate Professor and 40 respondents from the cadre-II employees on the post of Assistant Professor were randomly selected making the total sample of 160 respondents. The interview schedule was prepared in light of the objectives and the respondents were interviewed at their workplace. Ex-post facto research design was used.

An attempt was made to understand and analyse the stress symptoms experienced by the employees of SAUs. Close-ended sixteen stress symptoms were enlisted on four point continuum viz., never, sometimes, often and very often and respondents were asked to give their response on

each stress symptoms by putting tick mark against suitable alternate. The score 0, 1, 2 and 3 were assigned for never, sometimes, often and very often, respectively. Then the mean score was worked out for individual stress symptoms.

An attempt was made to understand and analyse the stress coping actions taken by the employees to overcome the job stress. Personal stress coping actions were asked with thirteen close-ended questions. The respondents were asked to give their response on each coping action by putting tick mark against suitable alternate. The score 2, 1 and 0 were assigned for always, sometimes and never, respectively in personal coping mechanism. Then, the mean score was worked out for individual stress coping action.

According to the objectives of the study, an English version interview schedule was developed. The actual work of data collection was done during the month of February-April, 2022. The respondent employees were interviewed personally at their work place only. Following statistical tools were used for analysis of data.

(i) Frequencies and percentage

The frequency distribution of the employees to SAUs were worked out and expressed in terms of percent. Simple comparisons were made on the basis of frequency and percentage.

(ii) Arithmetic mean

The mean is the result of the sum of all items in the series divided by the number of items. The formula is as under.

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum X_i}{n}$$

Where,

\bar{X} = Mean of the sample

X_i = Value of the i^{th} respondents

n = Total number of respondents

(iii) Rank

It is an order according to some statistical characteristics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stress can come from a variety of sources and it can affect all parts of our life, including our emotions, behaviors, thinking ability, and physical health. No part of the body is immune. The data related to stress symptoms experienced by employees of SAUs are presented in Table-1.

Table 1 : Distribution of the employees of SAUs of as per the stress symptoms experienced (n=160)

Sr. No.	Stress symptoms	Cadre of the employees				Overall	
		Cadre-I		Cadre-II		Mean Score	Rank
		Mean Score	Rank	Mean Score	Rank		
1	Headaches/migraine	0.81	II	1.04	I	0.93	II
2	Aches and pains	0.64	V	0.94	IV	0.79	IV
3	High blood pressure	0.39	XIII	0.68	XII	0.53	XIII
4	Poor sleep patterns	0.65	IV	0.81	VIII	0.73	VII
5	Indigestion	0.55	IX	0.83	VII	0.69	VIII
6	Stomach ulcers	0.19	XV	0.30	XV	0.24	XV
7	Asthma	0.11	XVI	0.05	XVI	0.08	XVI
8	Anxiety	0.44	XII	0.89	VI	0.66	IX
9	Depression	0.53	X	0.65	XIII	0.59	XII
10	Heart disease	0.25	XIV	0.39	XIV	0.32	XIV
11	Changes in appetite	0.61	VI	0.93	V	0.77	V
12	Exhaustion	0.74	III	1.01	II	0.88	III
13	Increased consumption of tobacco	1.11	I	0.79	IX	0.95	I
14	Inability to concentrate	0.58	VIII	0.73	XI	0.65	X
15	Erratic moods	0.59	VII	0.95	III	0.77	VI
16	Low self-esteem/confidence	0.51	XI	0.78	X	0.64	XI

It is apparent from the data presented in Table 1 that the most experienced symptoms of cadre-I employees were increased consumption of tobacco, headache/migraine, exhaustion, poor sleep patterns and aches and pains which ranked first, second, third, fourth and fifth respectively. The other important symptoms were changes in appetite, erratic moods, inability to concentrate, indigestion and depression in descending order.

In context to cadre-II, the symptom most experienced by the employees was headaches/migraine which stood first followed by exhaustion, erratic moods, aches and pains and changes in appetite which ranked second, third, fourth and fifth respectively. The other important symptoms in descending order were anxiety, indigestion, poor sleep patterns, increased consumption of tobacco and low self-

esteem.

In consideration with both the cadres together, the most experienced symptoms by the employees were increased consumption of tobacco, headaches/migraine, exhaustion, aches and pains and changes in appetite which ranked first, second, third, fourth and fifth respectively.

This finding is in partial conformity with the findings of Patel *et al.* (2014).

An attempt was also made to know the stress coping actions taken by employees of SAUs to counteract the job stress. The employee's responses were elicited through close-ended questions. The data pertaining to stress coping actions of cadre-I and cadre-II employees are depicted in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively.

Table 2 : Distribution of cadre-I employees of SAUs of as per their stress coping actions

(n=80)

Sr. No.	Stress coping action	Always	Sometimes	Not at all	Mean Score	Rank
1	Physical exercise	57 (71.25)	18 (22.50)	05 (06.25)	1.65	III
2	Pranayam	24 (30.00)	33 (41.25)	23 (28.75)	1.01	XIII
3	Yogasans	23 (28.75)	25 (31.25)	32 (40.00)	0.89	XIV
4	Prayer/Meditation	38 (47.50)	27 (33.75)	15 (18.75)	1.29	XI
5	Diet management	33 (41.25)	38 (47.50)	09 (11.25)	1.30	X
6	Time management	57 (71.25)	19 (23.75)	04 (05.00)	1.66	II
7	Planning in advance	51 (63.75)	18 (22.50)	11 (13.75)	1.50	VI
8	Taking leave	01 (01.25)	41 (51.25)	38 (47.50)	0.54	XV
9	Involving in hobby					
	A Music listening	33 (41.25)	33 (41.25)	14 (17.50)	1.24	XII
	B Painting	03 (03.75)	17 (21.25)	60 (75.00)	0.29	XVII
	C Drawing	03 (03.75)	12 (15.00)	65 (81.25)	0.23	XVIII
	D Watching Television	50 (62.50)	22 (27.50)	08 (10.00)	1.53	V
	E Reading	34 (42.50)	39 (48.75)	07 (08.75)	1.34	IX
	F Any other	02 (02.50)	07 (08.75)	71 (88.75)	0.14	XX

Sr. No.	Stress coping action	Always	Sometimes	Not at all	Mean Score	Rank
10	Seeking social support					
	A Friends	51 (63.75)	17 (21.25)	12 (15.00)	1.49	VII
	B Family members	52 (65.00)	20 (25.00)	08 (10.00)	1.55	IV
	C Colleagues	43 (53.75)	30 (37.50)	07 (08.75)	1.45	VIII
11	Positive thinking /Learn to make compromise with every situation	70 (87.50)	09 (11.25)	01 (01.25)	1.86	I
12	Counseling and psychotherapy	05 (06.25)	17 (21.25)	58 (72.50)	0.34	XVI
13	Medical (tranquilizer, sleeping pills etc.)	03 (03.75)	08 (10.00)	69 (86.25)	0.18	XIX

The data depicted in Table 2 indicate that the most important stress coping actions taken by the employees of cadre-I to counteract the job stress were positive thinking /learn to make compromise with every situation, time management, doing physical exercise, seeking social support from family members, watching T.V. and planning in advance which stood first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth, respectively base on mean score. The other important

stress coping actions were seeking social support from friends, seeking social support from colleagues, reading, diet management, prayer/meditation and music listening which ranked seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth, respectively.

This finding is in consonance with that reported by Joshi (2012).

Table 3: Distribution of cadre-II employees of SAUs of as per their stress coping actions

(n=80)

Sr. No.	Stress coping action	Always	Sometimes	Not at all	MeanScore	Rank
1	Physical exercise	44 (55.00)	31 (38.75)	05 (06.25)	1.49	6
2	Pranayam	13 (16.25)	41 (51.25)	26 (32.50)	0.84	14
3	Yogasans	14 (17.50)	38 (47.50)	28 (35.00)	0.83	15
4	Prayer/Meditation	39 (48.75)	22 (27.50)	19 (23.25)	1.25	11
5	Diet management	29 (36.25)	33 (41.25)	18 (22.50)	1.14	12
6	Time management	59 (73.75)	16 (20.00)	05 (06.25)	1.68	2
7	Planning in advance	54 (67.50)	23 (28.75)	03 (03.75)	1.64	3
8	Taking leave	13 (16.25)	44 (55.00)	23 (28.75)	0.88	13
9	Involving in hobby					
	A Music listening	37 (46.25)	30 (37.50)	13 (16.25)	1.30	9
	B Painting	06 (07.50)	10 (12.50)	64 (80.00)	0.28	16
	C Drawing	04 (05.00)	13 (16.25)	63 (78.75)	0.26	17
	D Watching T.V.	43 (53.75)	27 (33.75)	10 (12.50)	1.41	7
	E Reading	41 (51.25)	28 (35.00)	11 (13.75)	1.38	8
	F Any other	07 (08.75)	06 (07.50)	67 (83.75)	0.25	18

Sr. No.	Stress coping action	Always	Sometimes	Not at all	MeanScore	Rank
10	Seeking social support					
	A Friends	51 (63.75)	24 (30.00)	05 (06.25)	1.58	5
	B Family members	54 (67.50)	20 (25.00)	06 (07.50)	1.60	4
	C Colleagues	39 (48.75)	24 (30.00)	17 (21.25)	1.28	10
11	Positive thinking/Learn to make compromise with every situation	65 (81.25)	14 (17.50)	01 (01.25)	1.80	1
12	Counseling and psychotherapy	0 (00.00)	12 (15.00)	68 (85.00)	0.15	19
13	Medical (tranquilizer, sleeping pills etc.)	0 (00.00)	07 (08.75)	73 (91.25)	0.09	20

As it is revealed from the data depicted in Table 3, the most important stress coping actions taken by the employees of cadre-II to counteract the job stress were positive thinking /learn to make compromise with every situation, time management, planning in advance, seeking social support from family members, seeking social support from friends and doing physical exercise, which stood first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth, respectively base on mean score. The other important stress coping actions were watching TV, reading, music listening, seeking social support from colleagues, prayer/meditation and diet management which ranked seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth, respectively.

Again with the view point of frequency and number of employees using the stress coping actions, it is apparent that stress coping actions viz. positive thinking / learn to make compromise with every situation, time management, planning in advance, seeking social support from friends and family members, physical exercise, watching TV and reading were found to be used always by majority of the employees.

This finding is in consonance with that reported by Joshi (2012).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the present investigation lead to conclude that the most experienced stress symptoms were increased consumption of tobacco, headaches/migraine, exhaustion, aches and pains and change in appetite; while major stress coping actions taken by the employees of SAUs to overcome the stress were positive thinking /learn to make compromise with every situation, planning in advance, time management, seeking social support from friends and family members.

POLICY IMPLICATION

- (1) Because of a lack of essential skill to execute the work, simple tasks can appear to be complex. These circumstances could also lead to a more pronounced feeling of workload. In the case of cadre-II employees, training exposure was comparatively less. Such employees should be given due training exposure in order to improve their skills and knowledge so as to influence their perceptions of role overload, personality, self-confidence etc. positively.
- (2) Stress management training programmes should be conducted for employees by organization. Every employee should be valued equally, and a rewarding and motivating mechanism for good work should be in place. At the organizational level, certain stress coping techniques can be taken up that the Unit heads and university authorities should keep in mind to assist the employees to manage their job stress.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest among researchers.

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