

A Study on Job Induced Stress among Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives in Jaipur City of Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: As the pharmaceutical industry is growing day by day the need for the Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives (PSRs) are also increasing simultaneously. The pressure of achieving targets is transforming the nature of job which eventually resulting into the Job Induced Stress (JIS) among PSRs.

Objective: This study is trying to assess the JIS and the various factors responsible for it, some of the health consequences are also taken into the consideration.

Method: Data has been collected using a self-administered questionnaire which has been distributed to the PSRs (n=68). Data were entered into SPSS (version 17) & analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Result: Almost 56% of PSRs are feel under pressure & have some form of stress main reason are found to be dissatisfaction with job profile (59%) & working hours (60.35%), continuous pressure for improved performance (69%) and conflicting demands between work & home (75%).

Conclusion: Any development in professional practice of job need to be considered in the context of the well being of the PSRs who implement and are affected by the changes. Unless JIS for the PSRs is recognized and reduced they will remain on the brim of getting many health consequences.

Keywords: Stress; Pharmaceutical Sales Representatives; Job satisfaction; Job stress.

Introduction

Stress is a most persisting factor in professional & modern life. The concept of stress was first introduced by the late Canadian-Hungarian medical scientist Hans Selye (1907-1983). It's an equivocal word, for some it means excitement and challenge (good stress or eustress) for many others it reflects an undesirable state of chronic fatigue, worry frustration and inability to cope (bad stress or distress)^[1]. He looked it as a "nonspecific" response of the organism to any demand for change^[2]. Stress can be further refined as the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressure of the situation. Signs of stress can be observed by people's behavior, peculiarly when

changes occur in their behavior^[3]. Acute responses to stress has been noticed in many diverse areas like feeling (e.g. anxiety, depression, irritability, fatigue), behavior (e.g. unmotivated, tearful, being withdrawn, aggressive), thinking (e.g. difficulties in problem solving and concentration) or physical responses (e.g. headache, nausea, palpitation). If stress persist for long time it can lead to the changes in the neuroendocrine, cardiovascular, autonomic and immunological functioning, which is further leading to mental and physical ill health (e.g. heart disease, depression, anxiety)^[4]. There are some more studies according to which work stress can be an important determinant of CHD among working-age populations, it has indirect effect on health behaviors and direct effect on neuroendocrine stress pathway^[5]. Another study done in Japan demonstrates a significant association between job stress and the risk of an incident strokes^[6]. Stress is one of the most destructive factor, one can face in their job. The study of job stress began most recognizably with work on role conflict and role ambiguity. Since that beginning many theories have been developed concerning the relationship between job stressors and resulting strains or illness^[7]. 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 and can lead to poor health and even injury^[8]. Natures of the job or work contents have been found to be associated with stress and health risks. Some factors which are intrinsic to the work content include long hours, work overload, time pressure, difficult or complex task, lack of breaks, lack of variety and poor physical work conditions. Unclear work or conflicting roles and boundaries can cause stress as well as lack of promotion, lack of training, inadequate incentives and job insecurity are also some of the persisting stressful condition^[9]. According to the WHO (World Health Organization) definition, health refers to the “a state of wellbeing in which the individual is able to work productively and fruitfully^[10]. A healthy working environment is one in which there is not only absence of harmful condition but an abundance of health promoting ones^[11], and to get healthy environment is the right of every person involve in any kind of job including Pharmaceutical sales representatives (PSRs). PSRs are that cadres of people who are mainly involve in the sales promotion of the drugs or pharmaceuticals and this is the reason that they have to undergo many stressed condition. It is evident by a research that PSRs are at increased risk of ill health due to the nature of their work^[12]. Previous researches also indicated that PSRs are exposed to long working hours, prolonged driving and manual handling of the promotional materials^[13]. All the above factors may lead to the job stress among PSRs. One of the studies confirms the presence of job stress among PSRs and the noticeable responsible factors was unsupportive colleagues, work overload & continuous pressure for improved performance^[14]. A number of studies are now suggesting that job-induced stress is a great threat to health as smoking or not exercising, so as true for the job of PSRs. 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 PSRs.

Material and Method

This study was a descriptive cross-sectional study involving 68 PSRs (pharmaceutical sales representatives) working in different pharmaceutical organization. Convenient sampling was used in selecting PSRs to participate in this study. All the subjects were educationally well

qualified, the Investigator has requested the PSRs to fill in the questionnaire at the time of vis-a-vis session. Completion of the questionnaire was voluntary. Data was collected by guided self-administered questionnaire. The time taken by the PSRs for filling in the questionnaire was around 25 minutes.

The questionnaire consist 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 questionnaire^[15], the third part was to capture some of the factors responsible for the job induced stress among PSRs 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 'sometime', 2 for 'seldom', 1 for 'never'. Total score on this scale is considered for the assessment of work stress (minimum & maximum scores are 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 have 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 Stress^[16]. The data has been entered into the SPSS (version 17th) and analyzed using the descriptive statistics.

Results

Most of the PSRs are in 25-29 years of age i.e. 55.9 % followed by 20-24 yrs (39.7%) and 4.4% are from >30 years of age. Almost all of the subjects are male as this is the mainly male oriented job, so sample could not able to catch the female subjects. Around 57.4% of the subjects are unmarried and 42.6% are married. Mostly PSRs are having educational background of science 72.1% followed by commerce 20.6% and then arts 7.4%. Regarding the educational level 48.5 % are graduates followed by the post graduates i.e. 42.6% and then diplomas 8.8%. Majority of them (39.7 %) are having work experience of less than 2 years 29.4 % are having work experience of 2-4 years followed by 16.2% having experience of 4-6 years then person who have experience >6 years only contributing 14.8%.

About 53% of the PSRs have taken up job with their interest Inspite of this 59% of the subjects are not satisfied with their job profile. The main reasons for the dissatisfaction among subjects regarding their job are found to be unpleasant task (82.5 %), 77.5% said that they have insecurity for their job, 75% found their job profile has lack of variety, inadequate incentives is about 75%, 72.5% said that they have to stay away from their home so that's why they are not satisfied with their job followed by 70% found their job profile of low social value, 67.5 % said they have to travel a lot, 67.5% said that they have unclear /unfair performance system, 65% found lack of opportunity for promotion.

60.3% PSRs are working for 5-10 hours followed by 36.8% are working for 10-15 hours and remaining 2.9% are working for less than 5 hours, as the length of the working hours seems to be quite less still 60.35% of PSRs are not satisfied with their job working hours. About 95.6% of

PSRs 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 86.7%, they are not getting their meals at regular times about 80% have this problem. The other reasons are found to be strict & inflexible working hours (77.8%) and 75.6% said that because of unpredictable working hours they are not satisfied.

About 69% of PSRs are feeling continuous pressure from their managers to improving their performance. 75% of subjects are experiencing conflicting demands between their work and home. Because PSRs have to visit various hospitals, clinics & dispensaries about 72.1% of the subjects said that they are more prone to acquire different kind of infections.

According to the work stress questionnaire majority i.e. 55.9% of the PSRs were scored between 46-60 which interprets that they are often feel under pressure and out of control and they are likely to feeling some form of the stress. Various physical and emotional responses for job induced stress by subjects, were captured and depicted in (Figure 1)

Discussion

The present study extends extensive empirical support for the notion that PSRs are not satisfied with their nature of job, they don't found it comfortable. The tasks which they are performing in their job are 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 are dealing with the relationship of stress with the various job related factors, which suggests that PSRs are tensed about their job insecurity, although they are working hard there are no good policies for the incentives and promotion, there job is interfering in their personal life and they are facing continuous pressure for improved performance. These findings extend support to the earlier studies that PSRs are suffering from stress mainly because of the inadequate incentives, conflicting demands between personal and professional life and also pressure to improve performance^[14].

Findings also reveal that they have 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 are earning good money In spite of this their job is considered as a work of low social value which leads to kind of emotional stress.

There is no such policies regarding their travelling and they have to travel a lot which increase the accidental risk while travelling, which is also previously supported by a study according to which PSRs are more prone to accidents^[12]. They have to work a lot because of which they are 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 are 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 PSRs are more prone to have job induced stress.

Finding of the present study also support to the notion that, the score levels of stress are at higher side but not the highest ones, so we can say that their stress levels are reached up to some alarmingly levels if these levels are 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 reflects that presence of high levels of stress may lead to many negative physical and psychological health consequences^{[4] [5] [6] [7]}.

Conclusion

This study found that the PSRs are under pressure and they are facing JIS. At this present time many major changes are being imposed on the PSRs 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 PSRs who implement, and are affected by the changes. Further research is necessary to delve deeper into the various reasons for JIS and the solutions which could be applied to meliorating JIS in PSRs.

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Conflict of Interest: None declared.

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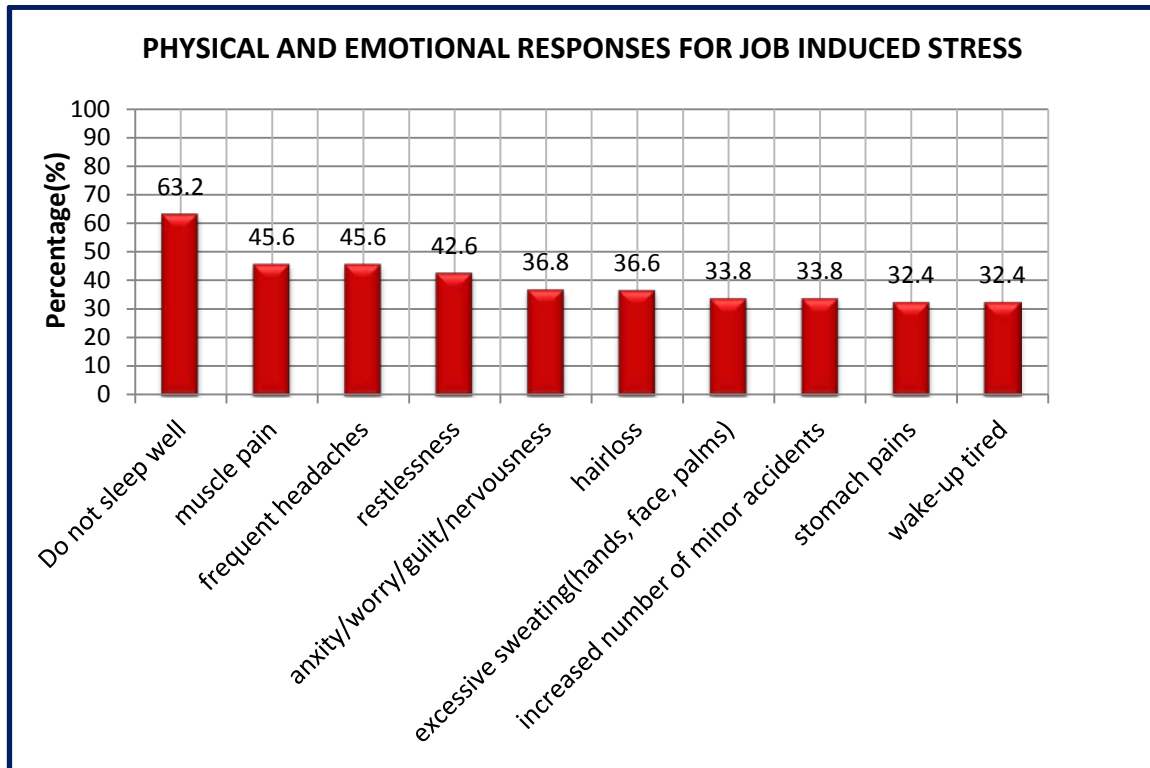


Figure 1: Physical & Emotional Responses