Stress Management and Coping Strategies In Hospitality Industry

*Mr.Sandesh J.Naik, Asst.Professor in Commerce, Dnyanprassarak Mandal's College & Research Centre Assagao, Bardez-Goa, India. deepsandesh28@rediffmail.com

Dr.K.G.Sankaranarayanan, Associate Professor, Narayan Zantye College of Commerce Sarvan, Bicholim-Goa, India.

ABSTRACT - The tourists from all over the world visit the state of Goa throughout the year in order to enjoy and relax at this beautiful scenic place. During their visit they require food and accommodation. The hospitality industry serves as a major player to provide food and accommodation. In Goa there are different options available for stay ranging from guest houses to star hotels. Same way, there are food options like street vendors, takeaways to restaurants of star hotels etc. This shows that there is lot of competition in the hospitality industry to serve customers in the best possible manner. The competitive work environment sometimes bring pressure or stress on employees. The industry conduct some programmes for positive work environment or for welfare of the employees. The present paper focuses on programmes adopted by hospitality industry for stress free work environment. The study further identifies coping mechanism used by lower level and managerial level employees. The study is based on survey method by using structured questionnaire. The study identifies that, lower level employees have given top priority to emotion focused coping mechanism. In case of managers, they gave top priority to problem focused coping mechanism. The study concludes that the hospitality industry implements programmes for creating positive work environment and employees at their level have used both coping mechanisms to manage stress.

Key Words: Hospitality, Work environment and Coping mechanism

I.   INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Our life is full of roller coaster ride designed with turns, steep slopes and inversions. It is very important that we should be ready for all kind of difficulties or uncertainties having turns and slopes.

When an individual working in the organisation, he comes across different types of hurdles with turns and slopes such as increased volume of work, role conflict, increased expectations of higher authorities, harassment from colleagues or superiors, lack of recognitions, lack of rewards, job uncertainties, etc. All of the above mentioned factors are responsible for creating stressful environment at the workplace. The stressful environment brings various consequences to employees as well as to employers.

From employees point of view they suffer in different ways such as low productivity or inefficiency, high absenteeism rate, lack of concentration in job assignments in addition to these various physical or health illness such as heart stroke, high blood pressure, fever etc.

From employer point of view they will suffer in terms of low profitability, low productivity or in-efficiency of employees, low quality services to customers and bad image of the organisation in the society because they are unable to provide requisite environment.

Stress issue is not a onetime activity and it can occur or pop-up at any moment. Thus, it has become the necessity for the organisation that they should take corrective measures to overcome the stress issues on a regular basis. In addition to the efforts of the organisation, employees also takes efforts to manage or cope with stress. Such coping mechanisms are based on personality of employees.

The present study deals with Stress Management Programme and Coping Mechanism used in hospitality industry which is considered as prime industry in service sectors.

In order to provide quality service to customers or in other words to satisfy customers, it is very important that organisation should satisfy their employees first by giving them positive work environment and by organising Stress Management or Welfare Programme.

The present paper deals with efforts of the organisation to keep workplace stress free as well as coping strategies used by individual employees.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The research work contributed by **Hsin Hui Sunny Hu and Chien Wei Cheng (2010)** suggests that direct action coping strategy is required where employees should recognise the situations as opportunities in order to deal with job stress which is originated from task characteristics and work load. Like previous studies the research done by **Murat Kizanlikli and Burhan ùener (2012)** studied coping methods adopted by hotel managers of the departments. The study revealed that managers mostly use self-confident and optimistic approach coping with stress because they are problem focused coping. The study further revealed that coping methods differ based on following demographic variables such as age, marital status and education level except gender. **Ajgaonkar, S. (2006)** has identified in his study that to reduce the stress, the hotel managers should use following measures such as building action plan from individual and team point of view, practice of time management and focus on rational or scientific thinking related to work issues. In addition to this the organisation should conduct motivational programme, career coaching and personal counselling in order to know the level of stress.

The research work contributed by **Wireko-Gyebi Sampson and Oheneba Akyeampong (2014)** suggests that in order to address work related stress of front line hotel employees, the management should focus on various elements of work life such as frontline employee training, encouragement from higher authorities, job promotions, timely increments of remuneration and encourage them for some relaxation activities. Like previous one, the similar type of study conducted by **Joselito R. Ereno Kevin M. Andrade Shannen I. Miyauchi Roxy Salinda Raizelle R. Arevalo Janilyn Reyes (2014)** revealed that employees of fast food service sector mostly use emotion-based coping mechanism. The study further revealed that employees of Filipinos are described as being a religious people because of that they use religious and denial coping mechanism to reduce stress.

In the study of **Patchanittha Srikhum (2013)** the following programmes are found more effective to manage stress as they follow supportive work environment, flexible work schedule, employee's empowerment, safe work place and skill development programme. The study further stated that employees used both emotion focused and problem focused coping mechanism when they encounter stress at the workplace. The emotion focused coping mechanism are positive thinking, advice from others, prayer and avoid problems. The problem focused coping mechanism are to face difficulties, discuss problems with others, seek information, acquiring work knowledge and changing plan.

According to **Dr.Swaminathan J, K.Bharathpriya, Keerthi K. Keerthi (2015),** the organisation can use different activities such as vocational tours, yoga, meditations, awareness programme, related benefits of physical exercises and recognition to employees at right time for their efforts. **Sudha Tiwari, Dr. Rashmi Bansal (2016)** arrived at in a study on working women in hospitality industry found that they preferred to use following different coping mechanism to manage stress such as thinking positively, reduction in responsibilities, spending time with family members and counseling. On the other hand hotels are using different coping mechanism such as following six offs in a month, women meet in a month and providing them with learning and training programs to help employees to manage stress.

In the words of **Dr Purnima Bora (2017),** the stress management programme is the ultimate solution to address stress and its effects. The study further stated that joint efforts of employees and organisation is required to manage stress. The individual efforts include exercises, outdoor games, yoga, watching TV, taking enough sleep and holidaying. On the other hand organisational efforts includes providing stress free or positive work environment and addressing stress problems at right time.

Ajeet Kumar Lal Mohan, (2017) has arrived at that there is positive agreement in ranking of strategies to reduce stress among hospitality employees. The following coping strategies are ranked from top to bottom based on Friedman's Test. Proper work load allocation got the ranking of 1 followed by remaining coping strategies such as positive work environment, compensation based on performance, time management, effective communication network, democratic approach in decision making, job based training, performance based promotion, career development training, personality development and mind relaxation techniques, and commitment of top management got last rank among coping strategies. **Sachin Vernekar, D. H. (2018)** in order to reduce stress at the workplace, suggests that the organisation should adopt the stress management mechanisms such as time management system, effective training and development programme, counselling related to work and other issues, role clarity, etc.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify coping mechanism of lower and managerial level employees.
2. To identify programmes adopted in hospitality industry for stress free or healthy working environment

III.   METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study was designed as a descriptive one and was carried out by conducting personal interview and survey of 200 employees from hospitality industry in North Goa.The standardized instrument was used for data collection. The data collected has been subjected to descriptive statistics in order to arrive at a logical conclusion.

Sampling: - Stratified random sampling was done to obtain response from lower and managerial level employees.

Survey method: Under this method researcher contacted lower and managerial level employees with a pre-designed statements related to coping mechanism. Further personal interview were conducted to obtain information related to stress management programmes.

IV.   DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY

Frequency Table of Demographic Variables (Table 1)

VARIABLES	LOWER	MANAGERIAL
Age	**Frequency (%)**	**Frequency (%)**
18-25	26	19
26-35	64	53
36-55	09	26
56 & above	01	02
Gender	**Frequency (%)**	**Frequency (%)**
Male	92	70
Female	08	30
Marital Status	**Frequency (%)**	**Frequency (%)**
Married	59	66
Single	33	32
Separated	08	02
Education	**Frequency (%)**	**Frequency (%)**
Illiterate	17	00
Up to S.S.C	64	00
Up to H.S.S.C	19	00
Graduation	00	72
Post-Graduation	00	26
Diploma/Degree in Hospitality	00	02
Total	100	100

 (Source: Primary Data)

Coping Mechanism

Coping is individual efforts of employees to manage stress at the workplace. There are two ways to manage stress i.e. problem focused and emotion focused coping mechanism. In case of problem focused coping mechanism an individual make efforts to manage, improve or to change the situation. Whereas emotion focused refers to attempts, thoughts or actions which made to lessen emotional impact of stress (Bosworth, Bastian, Rimer, & Siegler, 2003). The following are the examples of problem-focused coping including problem-solving activities, seeking information about what to do, holding back from impulsive and premature actions, and confronting difficulty. Whereas emotion-focused coping may include behaviours such as seeking others' company, cognitive responses such as denial of the true situation, and looking optimistically at the problem (Esther, Daly, Hancock, Bidewell, Johnson, Lambert, & Lambert, 2006).

Based on the above definitions, the following statements of coping strategies are classified into two i.e. emotion focused and problem focused coping mechanism.

Further, based on the Mean score it was decided to which strategies employees give priority and accordingly it is arranged in descending order.

Descriptive Statistics (Lower Level Employees)

Coping Strategies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coping Style
I get into more arguments than usual.	**4.67**	**.551**	Emotion Focused
I remain in my house and avoid friends and family as much as possible.	**4.29**	**.998**	Emotion Focused
I find myself wasting more time watching television.	**4.23**	**1.08**	Emotion Focused
I seek out more leisure activities to occupy my time and thoughts.	**4.12**	**1.06**	Problem Focused
I throw myself into careless behaviour to divert my mind from problems.	**4.05**	**.936**	Emotion Focused
I blame practically everyone but myself for my problems	**3.82**	**1.05**	Emotion Focused
I am obsessed over my problems.	**3.77**	**.886**	Emotion Focused
I try to do the best I can under any circumstance	**3.75**	**1.12**	Problem Focused
I end up blowing up at some point.	**3.75**	**1.02**	Emotion Focused
I count to ten, take deep breaths, or practice other relaxation techniques.	**3.73**	**1.61**	Problem Focused
I just stay in bed in laziness mode because I can't deal with my problems.	**3.69**	**1.19**	Emotion Focused
Even when people want to help me, I reject their offer.	**3.61**	**1.11**	Emotion Focused
I experience difficulty sleeping because my mind is racing.	**3.54**	**1.10**	Emotion Focused
I deny that there is a problem at all.	**3.45**	**1.10**	Emotion Focused
I try to spend more time relaxing with friends and/or loved ones.	**3.26**	**1.25**	Emotion Focused
I join a support group to help me with the problem.	**3.23**	**1.72**	Problem Focused
I readjust my existing goals to fit with the new situation.	**3.20**	**.752**	Problem Focused
I know how to calm myself down.	**3.09**	**1.29**	Emotion Focused
I use physical activity as a	**3.07**	**1.51**	Problem

way to get rid of the pent-up energy.			Focused
I am unpleasant to be around.	**3.06**	**1.73**	Emotion Focused
I find a way to express my emotions related to job (writing in a journal or blog, playing some music, drawing or painting, etc).	**3.02**	**1.27**	Emotion Focused
I try to think about how lucky I am when compared with those who have even more difficult problems.	**2.67**	**.829**	Emotion Focused
I take emotional support from others.	**2.63**	**.884**	Emotion Focused
I outline a few strategies to resolve the issue and choose the one that seems to be the best.	**2.61**	**1.19**	Problem Focused
I remind myself to focus on the good things in my life instead of the bad.	**2.50**	**1.02**	Emotion Focused
I try to find the information that I need to understand my situation.	**2.46**	**1.14**	Problem Focused
If I think there is some research or other information available about a problem I have, I will seek it out.	**2.45**	**1.21**	Problem Focused
My thoughts about the situation prevent me from concentrating on other important tasks.	**2.43**	**1.24**	Emotion Focused
My thoughts are inspired by the stressful situations I go through.	**2.41**	**1.00**	Emotion Focused
I find reasons to laugh.	**2.39**	**.852**	Emotion Focused
I try to find people who can offer me information or otherwise help me with my problem.	**2.24**	**1.24**	Problem Focused
I am always hopeful.	**2.19**	**1.02**	Emotion Focused
I develop strategies to get myself back on the track.	**2.19**	**1.02**	Problem Focused
I remind myself that things will eventually get better.	**2.17**	**1.04**	Emotion Focused
I try to look at the issue from different perspectives.	**2.13**	**1.16**	Emotion Focused
I am able to communicate my needs.	**2.04**	**.803**	Problem Focused
I think of ways that can change the situation and make it better.	**1.83**	**1.00**	Problem Focused

Source: Coping & Stress Management Skills Test (http://psychologytoday.tests.psychtests.com)

Descriptive Statistics (Managerial Level Employees)

Coping Strategies	Mean	Std. Deviation	Coping Style
I try to do the best I can under any circumstance	**4.47**	**.559**	Problem Focused
If I think there is some research or other information available about a problem I have, I will seek it out.	**4.39**	**.650**	Problem Focused
I remind myself to focus on the good things in my life instead of the bad.	**4.26**	**.719**	Emotion Focused
I try to look at the issue from different perspectives.	**4.25**	**.744**	Emotion Focused
I am always hopeful.	**4.25**	**.857**	Emotion Focused
I outline a few strategies to resolve the issue and choose the one that seems to be the best.	**4.17**	**.726**	Problem Focused
I remind myself that things will eventually get better.	**4.15**	**.730**	Emotion Focused
I am able to communicate my needs.	**4.14**	**.888**	Problem Focused
I think of ways that can change the situation and make it better.	**4.14**	**.804**	Problem Focused
I try to find the information that I need to understand my situation.	**4.13**	**1.01**	Problem Focused
I develop strategies to get myself back on the track.	**4.12**	**.913**	Problem Focused
I try to think about how lucky I am when compared with those who have even more difficult problems.	**3.95**	**.821**	Emotion Focused
I know how to calm myself down.	**3.87**	**1.25**	Emotion Focused
I find reasons to laugh.	**3.77**	**1.06**	Emotion Focused
My thoughts are inspired by the stressful situations I go through.	**3.69**	**1.03**	Emotion Focused
I try to find people who can offer me information or otherwise help me with my problem.	**3.60**	**1.09**	Problem Focused
I join a support group to help me with the problem.	**3.52**	**1.17**	Problem Focused
I readjust my existing goals to fit with the new situation.	**3.33**	**.911**	Problem Focused
I find a way to express my emotions related to job (writing in a journal or blog, playing some music,	**2.79**	**1.35**	Emotion Focused

drawing or painting, etc).			
I try to spend more time relaxing with friends and/or loved ones.	2.77	1.40	Emotion Focused
I take emotional support from others.	2.72	1.11	Emotion Focused
My thoughts about the situation prevent me from concentrating on other important tasks.	2.67	1.29	Emotion Focused
I count to ten, take deep breaths, or practice other relaxation techniques.	2.55	1.28	Problem Focused
I seek out more leisure activities to occupy my time and thoughts.	2.42	1.13	Problem Focused
I use physical activity as a way to get rid of the pent-up energy.	2.22	1.32	Problem Focused
I am obsessed over my problems.	2.17	1.28	Emotion Focused
I end up blowing up at some point.	2.13	1.11	Emotion Focused
I deny that there is a problem at all.	2.12	.967	Emotion Focused
Even when people want to help me, I reject their offer.	2.06		Emotion Focused
I blame practically everyone but myself for my problems	1.86	1.23	Emotion Focused
I experience difficulty sleeping because my mind is racing.	1.77	1.11	Emotion Focused
I throw myself into careless behaviour to divert my mind from problems.	1.75	.869	Emotion Focused
I am unpleasant to be around.	1.71	.769	Emotion Focused
I remain in my house and avoid friends and family as much as possible.	1.57	.782	Emotion Focused
I find myself wasting more time watching television.	1.53	.784	Emotion Focused
I just stay in bed in laziness mode because I can't deal with my problems.	1.51	.745	Emotion Focused
I get into more arguments than usual.	1.33	.637	Emotion Focused

Source: Coping & Stress Management Skills Test (http://psychologytoday.tests.psychtests.com)

V. STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The programmes related to stress management are conducted by the organisation on a regular basis in order to create positive work environment as well as to deal with crises which may occur due to stressful situation. The stress among employees occurs either because of working conditions or due to personal life. The organisation takes effective measures to create positive environment by providing better working conditions such as physical infrastructure, proper allocation of work assignments, role clarity, group activity and various welfare programmes for employees.

The following activities or programmes are conducted in general in hospitality industry.

Birthday Celebration and Employee of the month

Birthday celebrations are conducted every month wherein all those Birthdays of employees and executives which falls under the month are celebrated together on a particular day. The management organises small function wherein cake cutting is done. Also some funny games and activities are conducted by the organisation.

Apart from this, the best employee of the month is chosen based on the performance for the month in order to raise the employee morale.

Sports Events

Sports events are organised in order to create team work or culture of team spirit among employees of different departments. The following events such as inter-department football and cricket matches; matches with other hotels or organisations are organised. In addition to these, indoor games are organised such as Table Tennis (Singles & Doubles), Carom Tournament (Singles & Doubles), Chess and many more.

Picnics or Tours

Picnics or tours are organised for staff and executives. The objectives of such programme are to relax themselves from routine work as well as it will help them to know each other very well.

Prize Distribution

Half yearly prize distribution for employee of the '**off season**' and other rewards which includes cash prizes and certificates.

Annual staff day

The organisation also celebrates annual staff day by organising activities such as Tug of war, Fun games, Passing the ball v

Display of happy moments

Photograph of Birthday celebration, employee of the month, picnics, prize distribution, sports events, staff annual day, etc. are displayed on Notice Board.

VI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. It was found that lower level employees give preference to emotion focused coping mechanism.
2. It was found that lower level employees depicts indifferent behaviour to cope with stress such as arguments, avoiding friends, diverting mind by

watching television, stay in bed, careless approach and blaming others.

3. In case of managerial level employees, it was found that they give preference to problem focused coping mechanism.

4. In case of stress management programmes, it was found that the hospitality industry conducts several programmes related to sports, cultural events, picnic, birthday celebration etc. to manage stress.

VII.   CONLCUSION

The hospitality industry is trying their best to provide world class quality services to their guests who are coming from all over the world to spend some time for relaxation, enjoyment or for business purpose. The industry puts employees under lot of pressure for continuous quality improvement by adopting different measures. It is very important for the management to keep balance between customers and employees because both are important for them for their survival and growth. In present context of hospitality industry, occupational stress is a major issue affecting organisation negatively in terms of their profitability, cost and overall efficiency. In similar fashion, it affects employees in terms of low productivity, low drive for achievement, lack of interest, ill health etc. So in order to manage stress at the workplace and to stay away from negative consequences, employer and employees use certain measures to manage it. In case of employees, the study revealed that both lower level and managerial level employees used emotion focused and problem focused coping mechanism according to the situation or event occurred in their work life. In case of lower level employees they have given top priority to emotion focused coping mechanism while in case of managers, they have given priority to problem focused coping mechanism. Further in case of lower level employees, study revealed that employees exhibit indifferent behaviour such as arguments, carless behaviour, blaming others, avoiding others, rejecting offers etc. over positive behaviour such as finding reasons to laugh, expressing emotion through music, painting etc. to cope with stress. In case of managerial level employees, they exhibit positive behaviour over indifferent behaviour to cope with stress.

Further, the present study has identified the stress management or welfare programmes adopted by the organisation for positive work environment. The stress management programmes which are organised in general in hospitality industry are birthday celebration, picnics, indoor games, outdoor games, annual staff day, etc. The said programmes give many advantages to the organisation as well as to the employees such as co-ordination among employees or departments, trust, better understanding, team work, etc. To conclude both employees as well as employer use stress management measures to deal with occupational stress.

VIII.   SUGGESTIONS

The top level management should encourage lower level employees to adopt problem focused coping mechanism by organising programmes such as personality development, communication and soft skills etc.

The top level management should design tailor made stress management programmes for lower and managerial level separately.

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