

## IMPACT OF PEER RELATIONSHIP OVER WORK STRESS: A STUDY ON SALES EMPLOYEES OF INSURANCE

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### ABSTRACT

*The present paper deals with a study of exploring any correlation between the state of peer relationship of an employee with the amount of work stress experienced by him or her. The relationship of an employee with his or her colleagues has always played a major role in the factors like job satisfaction and attrition rate. This paper is an attempt to understand whether such relation between peer relationships and work stress exist or not. The study is a pilot study conducted in only Insurance sector and restricted to the city of Rajkot due to lack of funds and manpower. The results derived through the study can be useful to conduct a larger research and can also be fruitful for the HR divisions of organizations to devise a strategy to reduce the amount of work stress experienced by employees.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Peer Relationship, Role Identity, Role Conflict, Peer Cohesiveness.*

### Introduction

Work Stress is probably one of the most common phenomenon seen in the work force employed in the organizations. While certain type of typical stress is needed to create an environment of performance standards, an excess amount of stress can easily turn into a “burnout” and can result into physical and mental wellbeing.

“Duress” as it is referred to creates imbalance in work and personal life and also, in extreme cases results into depression and demotivation. In current fast phased life, the common stressors which are generally identified are as follow:

- Fear of job insecurity
- Overtime and pressure to meet deadlines
- Pressure to perform month on month.

Work stress has long lasting effects on physical, mental and even emotional conditions of an employee. It is heard a lot in current times that work related stress even causes loss in family endeavors and the enthusiasm to pursue career aims. In current Indian corporate situation, almost all sectors have a lot of the above stressors. One sector among all is the Insurance sector. The insurance sector of India is growing at a pace of 10.99% year on year which is the second fastest growth rate in the world as far Insurance sector is concerned. The sector has 24 life insurance organizations who are engaged in fierce competition on the price and services front to gain more market share. It could be a convenient assumption that these conditions leave the employees with high amount of work stress. Peer relationships on the other hand are an emerging concept in HR. A few researches have claimed that healthy peer relationship can reduce a considerable amount of industrial grievances and disputes. The current research is an attempt to understand and seek any relation between health/unhealthy peer relationships and work stress. The research is conducted in a small area as a pilot study and the researcher aims at projecting it on larger canvas.

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**Objectives of the Study**

- To identify the difference between stressors among employees having healthy relationship with peers vis-à-vis employees having unhealthy relationship with peers
- To understand the relation between work stress and conditions of peer relationship.

**Type of Research: Exploratory & Descriptive**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Type of Data                               | Primary  |
| Data Collection Tool                       | Structured Questionnaire   |
| Sample Size                                | 50 employees   |
| Sampling Method                            | Stratified Random Sampling<br>Stratum 1: 25 employees having healthy relations with peers<br>Stratum 2: 25 employees not having healthy relations with peers |
| Stressors (Variables) included in research | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insecurity of losing the job</li> <li>• Deadline Pressures</li> <li>• Industrial disputes among peers</li> </ul>    |

**Limitations**

- The research is based on primary data and there are chances of biasness in the responses
- The area of the research is only Rajkot city

**Hypothesis Testing and Discussions**

**H<sub>0</sub>** There is no significant difference as regard to insecurity experienced by employees having good relationship vis-à-vis bad relationship with peers

**H<sub>1</sub>** There is a significant difference between insecurity experienced by employees having good relationship vis-à-vis bad relationship with peers

**Methodology**

Researcher had served a structured questionnaire which had questions judging the feeling of insecurity experienced by employees of both the stratum. The questions were:

- I keep feeling that office politics will lead to some problem in my job
- Whenever I feel insecure regarding my work, I share with my colleagues

The responses were captured on a scale of strongly agree.....Strongly disagree. The frequencies of the questions were totaled and chi square test was applied as follow:

**Table 1: Chi Square Test (Insecurity)**

|                        | Observed |    |   |    |    |      | Totals |          | Expected |          |      |          |     | Totals |
|------------------------|----------|----|---|----|----|------|--------|----------|----------|----------|------|----------|-----|--------|
|                        | SA       | A  | N | D  | SD | SA   |        |          | A        | N        | D    | SD       |     |        |
| Bad Peer Relationship  | 38       | 18 | 1 | 20 | 23 | 100  |        | 30       | 19       | 2.5      | 27.5 | 21       | 100 |        |
| Good Peer Relationship | 22       | 20 | 4 | 35 | 19 | 100  |        | 30       | 19       | 2.5      | 27.5 | 21       | 100 |        |
| Totals                 | 60       | 38 | 5 | 55 | 42 | 200  |        | 60       | 38       | 5        | 55   | 42       | 200 |        |
| 2=                     | 2.13     | +  |   |    |    | 1.63 | +      | 2.133333 | +        | 4.033333 | =    | 9.933333 |     |        |

**Discussion**

The chi square tabulated value at 5% significant difference is 3.841%, while the calculated value is 9.93 which clearly indicate that the null hypothesis stands rejected. This leads to an early generalization that there happens to be a significant difference between the feeling of insecurity of losing the job among employees and peer relationship plays a vital role in that. On further unstructured interview with few employees, it was observed that the employees having healthy relationships with peer tend to discuss the job related issues with colleagues and at times get vital advices and hands on instructions which reduce the said feeling of insecurity.

**H<sub>0</sub>** There is no significant difference as regard to disputes experienced by employees having good relationship vis-à-vis bad relationship with peers

**H<sub>1</sub>** There is a significant difference as regard to disputes experienced by employees having good relationship vis-à-vis bad relationship with peers

**Methodology**

Researcher had served a structured questionnaire which had questions judging the feeling of insecurity experienced by employees of both the stratum. The questions were:

- I miss my deadline often because of lack of cooperation from peers (Role conflict)
- Me and my colleagues tend to share each other’s work load (Peer Cohesiveness)
- I often take guidance from senior workers and that makes my work easy
- I often have heated arguments with my colleagues
- me and my colleagues often listen to each other’s problems
- I am involved in unnecessary fights with my colleagues

The responses were captured on a scale of strongly agree.....Strongly disagree. The frequencies of the questions were totaled and chi square test was applied as follow:

**Table 2: Chi Square Test (Disputes)**

|                             | Observed |     |    |            |    |       | Expected |     |          |     |    |          |
|-----------------------------|----------|-----|----|------------|----|-------|----------|-----|----------|-----|----|----------|
|                             | SA       | A   | N  | D          | SD | Total | SA       | A   | N        | D   | SD | Total    |
| Unhealthy Peer Relationship | 101      | 60  | 5  | 104        | 30 | 300   | 95       | 65  | 15       | 86  | 39 | 300      |
| Healthy Peer Relationship   | 89       | 70  | 25 | 68         | 48 | 300   | 95       | 65  | 15       | 86  | 39 | 300      |
| Totals                      | 190      | 130 | 30 | 172        | 78 | 600   | 190      | 130 | 30       | 172 | 78 | 600      |
| 2=                          | 0.378947 | +   |    | 44.4736842 |    | +     | 0.378947 | +   | 23.25263 |     | =  | 68.48421 |

**Discussion**

The above table indicates that the calculated value of chi square is 68.48 which is more than the critical value at 5% significant error which is 3.841. Hence, it can be said that the null hypothesis stands rejected. There is a significant difference between the feeling of disputes experienced by the employees having healthy relationship with their peers as compared to those employees who are having unhealthy relationship.

**H<sub>0</sub>** There is no significant relationship between peer relationship and work stress

**H<sub>1</sub>** There is a significant relationship between peer relationship and work stress.

**Methodology**

The researcher had administered the questionnaire in which there were a few questions judging the state of peer relationship of the respondent as well as the amount of stress experienced by the said respondent. The responses were measured on a scale of Strong agree to strongly disagree with assigned weightage of 5 to 1. The scores reflecting work stress was assigned as variable ‘Y’ and the score reflecting state of peer relationships was assigned as variable ‘X’. The following scores were derived.

**Table 3: Scores Reflecting Peer Relationships and Work Stress Experienced**

| Variable X<br>Questions   | Scores |    |   |    |    |      |
|---|--------|----|---|----|----|------|
|   | SA     | A  | N | D  | SD | Avg  |
| I keep feeling that office politics will lead to some problem in my job | 150    | 40 | 1 | 44 | 45 | 56   |
| Whenever I feel unsecured regarding my work, I share with my colleagues | 150    | 40 | 3 | 26 | 12 | 46.2 |
| I miss my deadline often because of lack of cooperation from peers      | 150    | 20 | 2 | 26 | 84 | 56.4 |
| me and my colleagues tend to share each other's work load               | 185    | 28 | 5 | 8  | 9  | 47   |

|   |     |     |   |    |     |      |
|---|-----|-----|---|----|-----|------|
| I often take guidance from senior workers and that makes my work easy       | 110 | 84  | 7 | 4  | 6   | 42.2 |
| I often have heated arguments with my colleagues                            | 200 | 40  | 6 | 26 | 30  | 60.4 |
| me and my colleagues often listen to each other's problems                  | 160 | 68  | 5 | 8  | 9   | 50   |
| I am involved in unnecessary fights with my colleagues                      | 145 | 40  | 0 | 64 | 6   | 51   |
| <b>Variable Y</b>   |     |     |   |    |     |      |
| I feel mentally bored going to work everyday                                | 185 | 92  | 2 | 46 | 45  | 74   |
| I experience headaches and back pain often after returning from office      | 210 | 96  | 1 | 36 | 45  | 77.6 |
| I suffer from insomnia  | 120 | 48  | 0 | 66 | 93  | 65.4 |
| I am not able to spend good time with my family after returning from office | 140 | 108 | 2 | 42 | 66  | 71.6 |
| I feel restless most of the time when I am at office                        | 55  | 64  | 9 | 78 | 75  | 56.2 |
| I have lost the motivation to work on my career                             | 195 | 124 | 2 | 32 | 36  | 77.8 |
| I miss a lot of social functions with family due to fatigue                 | 85  | 100 | 6 | 36 | 102 | 65.8 |
| I feel overburdened with work and worries most of the time                  | 125 | 108 | 2 | 64 | 42  | 68.2 |

Deriving the averages of the scores of both the variables, the following table was made and correlation test was applied.

| Y    | X    |
|------|------|
| 74   | 56   |
| 77.6 | 46.2 |
| 65.4 | 56.4 |
| 71.6 | 47   |
| 56.2 | 42.2 |
| 77.8 | 60.4 |
| 65.8 | 50   |
| 68.2 | 51   |

**Table 4: Correlation Test**

|          | Column 1 | Column 2 |
|----------|----------|----------|
| Column 1 | 1        |          |
| Column 2 | 0.490629 | 1        |

### Discussion

From the above test, the null hypothesis can be rejected as it concludes that there is a positive correlation of approximately 49% between the state of peer relationship of an employee and the work stress experienced by him or her.

### Major Findings

- 78% of the employees having healthy peer relationships claimed that they do not feel the severity of job insecurity. The probable reasons derived by the researcher during an unstructured interview with the above respondents were as follows:
  - Sharing of common job problems proves to be a vent to lose the job insecurity stress
  - Work difficulties are solved due to collective help of peers.
- 69% of the employees having unhealthy peer relationships claimed that they feel very high job stress due to not able to get guidance from senior colleagues
- 71% of the employees having healthy peer relationship were of the opinion that deadline pressures becomes easy to handle due to continuous support from the peers.
- There is a positive correlation between the state of peer relationship of an employee and the amount of work stress experienced by him/her.

### Conclusion

This pilot research has yielded some important aspects regarding the role of peer relationship in an organization. The factor of peer relationships has been discussed in many literatures in the domain of "Organizational Behavior", however it is still not regarded as a very important factor in yielding job satisfaction and removing work stress. A further research can be conducted in the same field including a larger sample size across different industries. The results can be helpful to organizations, especially the HR divisions to understand this factor and foster an effort to create a healthy peer relationship culture in the organization which might in turn solve the issues of high attrition and high amount of unnecessary industrial disputes.

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