
COPING WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL INJURIES IN THE WORKPLACE

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Today's knowledgeable workforce face automations and penetrative communication networks in work places, which make organizations less forgiving, and more demanding. During tremendous changes in technological and economic perspectives of organizations vis-à-vis social, attitudinal and cultural changes of the stake holders and consumers, opportunities triggered by fresh information in different dimensions and the need for optimal coordination of these opportunities make it imperative that knowledgeable workers formulate need-based replacement strategies for the coordination of operational activities. The best fit replacement strategy is one that can neutralize the rate of obsolescence in a quick changing scenario, with technological upgradations, and innovative processes that can address the unpredictable nature of the present day market. It is therefore evident that a knowledgeable worker should be prepared in a psychologically meaningful way to counter unpredictable demands of the proximal and distal functional compositions of market structures. The high rate of technological innovation and imitation always would stress upon the knowledgeable worker to orient himself or herself with a high degree of mental preparedness to counter the threats of uncertainty and rapid obsolescence of knowledge.

Ambitious, conscientious, and result-oriented knowledgeable workers perceive even the slightest failure or negative consequences as major constraints rather than factual negative events. This can develop behavioral and psychological impairments, which should be taken care of by the organization under the open system structure.

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Perceived work pressure: Onset of Psychological insecurity

Incessant inner struggle and discordant social relationships make knowledgeable workers susceptible to psychological disorders. Knowledgeable workers now-a-days are under competitive environmental thrusts like continuous work overload, changing nature of decision phenomena and time oppression which make them vulnerable to psychoneuroses. All these again revolve around effective and efficient information processing capabilities of the worker with respect to time, which emphasizes upon rapid information utilization for the generation of productive utilities in terms of formulation and implementation of the replacement strategies.

Precisely, knowledgeable workers face two simultaneous interacting forces i.e. environmental uncertainty of the market combination and organizational role assumption. This condition generates psychological insecurity, a feeling that is nurtured by apprehensions of negative consequences for maladaptive responses to stress and strains under the ever-changing scenario. The perceived emotional stresses appear to be severe when knowledgeable workers confront their incapacity to meet the demands of the anticipated negative outcomes that constitute their domain of fantasies.

Self-devaluation: Building block for Anxiety

A wide range of environmental and personal obstacles can bring frustration and conflict. Continuous frustration and conflict, lead to self-devaluation, linked to the extent by which an individual constantly perceives incapacity to overcome environmental and personal constraints. This self-devaluation is the building block of anxiety. Knowledgeable workers at the onset start with diffused anxiety syndromes over time after being exposed continuously to a series of sequential situations projected through the environmental demands in one hand and organizational compulsion on the other.

On the surface, it is true that conflict, frustration, and stress are the root causes of anxiety. But beneath that level, the unique nature of psychodynamics shaped and guided by self-devaluation acts as a trigger of the cycle of anxiety in which anxiety apprehension is basically the first stage. The final stage of this cycle culminates with psychosomatic disorders and/or mental disorders.

The problem of anxiety appears to be more ingrained today because work and non-work domains of one's life is closely intertwined. A large number of knowledgeable workers, thereby, complain about a loss in general work interest, inability to concentrate on productive thinking, psychosituational trauma, reflected through disorganization of psychological and behavioral dynamics, perception of time pressure affecting body metabolism etc. These are some of the many factors that help in the development of minor to intense psychoneuroses [see the diagram].

Anxiety: Consequence of reality shock

Often anxiety is the outcome of illusory anticipation of the results and not factual events, yet the personality of the worker plays a crucial role in the determination of the course of adjustive reactions to cope with anxiety. Since, it is the general trend of the modern organization to provide a competitive surrounding to the worker with a continuous influx of new technology, equipment, processes and management practices, individuals,



are under pressure to change and modify work relationships by altering respective work boundaries overtime.

The situation is more aggravated by the fact that exploration and establishment phases under career stages of any knowledgeable worker in any organization, irrespective of differential product-process-job characteristics' contents and contexts, gets minimum time span to undertake change in the process of rebuilding of self-perceived psychological boundaries regarding task and work relationships. The exploration to establishment phase, a job requires moderate to high degrees of emotional stability that ensure the ability to make quick adjustment. However, for all practical purposes, constant psychological pressure to go in for selecting appropriate psychological defenses continuously, even in the presence of emotional calm, may cause emotional disequilibrium due to anxiety apprehensions.

The disequilibrium and simultaneous mental incapacity to restore the equilibrium may act upon the individual to perceive varying degrees of mental pressures. With the passage of time, the person may produce syndromes of psychological injuries as a consequence of constant mental pressure that brings symptoms of psychoneuroses in different degrees within personality profiles. Psychological dilemmas of conflict, constant mental pressure for self-development, frustration arising out of inequalities between reality and personal expectation, feeling of self-devaluation etc., are some of the factors that individually or as a whole procreates low to high degree of anxiety states in the knowledgeable worker, irrespective of organizational design, work culture, work practices, and strategic implementation of activities.

Symptoms of Anxiety:

A few of physical symptoms are:

1. Undue fatigability of the soma
2. Quick exhaustion of nerve cells causing continuous tiredness

3. Breathlessness
4. Nausea
5. Loss of appetite
6. Craving for food
7. Insomnia
8. Indigestion
9. Constipation and/or diarrhea
10. Headache
11. Skin eruption
12. Blood Sugar
13. Blood pressure
14. Cardiac disorder

On the psychological side, symptoms relate to:

1. Fear
2. Phobia
3. Obsessive compulsive symptoms like irresistible constant urges to act, say or think in a particular way
4. Mental boredom
5. Feeling of insecurity
6. Lack of self-confidence

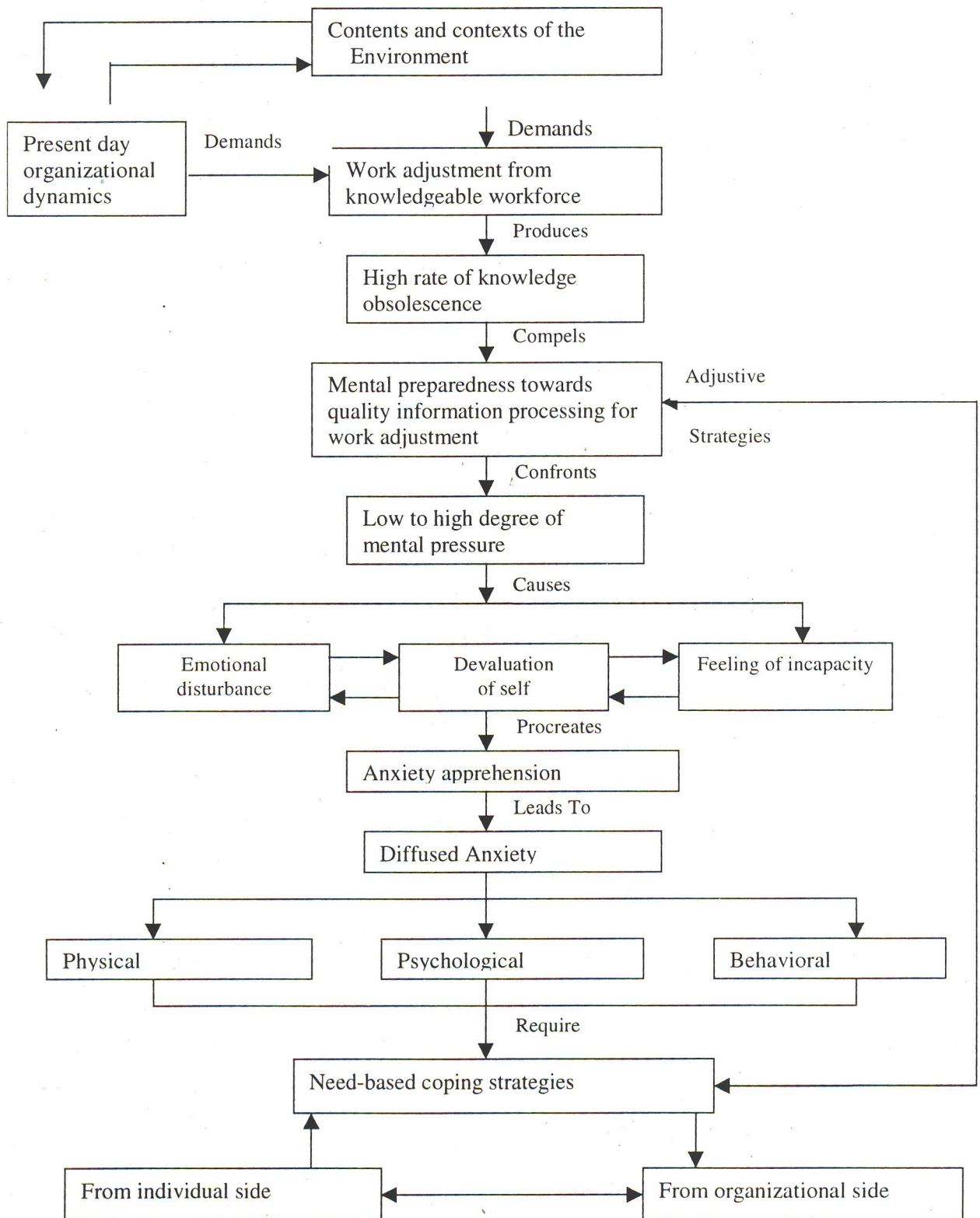
In the behavioral side, symptoms are:

1. Heightened irritability
2. Memory disturbances
3. Thought impairment
4. Morbid Doubt
5. Mental depression
6. Inability to enjoy different physical, social and cultural settings in a meaningful way.

Anxiety: Coping Strategies

It is evident that anxieties among knowledgeable workers have a far-reaching impact on the overall performance of individual workers as well as the organization. Therefore, individual and organizational strategies need to be adopted to minimize the ill effects of psychoneuroses to a considerable degree.

Diagram - 1: Anxiety Syndromes of the knowledgeable workforce



From the individual side, any knowledgeable worker should concentrate upon proper time management encompassing both work and family life through appropriate sequencing. It is important in today's organizations to identify the areas of job overload, incessant traveling, lack of interaction in the work place, inability to delegate, improper analysis of decision phenomena relating to job, career advancement, power drifting etc. Moreover, different areas of relationships and its combinations within and outside the work place including home life, depicting individual life style, are to be assessed in a psychologically meaningful way which, in the due course, will give the cues to the person about the ways and means of time based self-management. Basically, one has to ponder with behavioral self-development and relationship management by formulating proper action plans to administer work – related attitude that produces productive evaluation of job and organization on one hand and meaningful sustenance of family and social relationships on the other.

From the organizational side, the first tool is a recruitment strategy where proper stress is given on testing the personality and emotional balance of the knowledgeable worker. It is immaterial whether a person is competent enough with technical and conceptual skills because without proper personality patterns and concomitant emotional consonance with respect to particular occupation, a person can't translate the overall strategic decisions into actions. A number of personality patterns like assertive vs. unassertive, ambitious, stimulus seeker, obsession, type A, type B etc. are some of the many important domains which give the cues of work adjustment and productive utility of the workforce. A second strategy of the organization should be on training stressing on need-based self-development that allows the enhancement of beneficial utilities of mental power. This is possible when organization adopts the strategy of a learning organization with a thrust on the role of a mentor and setting up mentoring facilities.

Mentoring is a process that permits the organization to select expert trainers who facilitate

their protégés to develop pragmatic self-development programs commensurate with the missions and strategies of the organization. Thirdly, organizations should encourage the work force to exploit unpredictable opportunities by systematic organization through contingency planning. It involves identification of probable future stakes and devising optimal need-based action strategies to realize the estimated future outcome. Similarly, organizations should also consider pragmatic employee service programs in order to enable them to enjoy family life.

Last but not the least, a number of human and non-human factors create minor to high degrees of psychoneuroses. Organizations should take care about the problems of psychological trauma and injury, which may produce unproductive utility values of the knowledgeable workforce over time. Pragmatic strategies of the organization and the individual worker should be complementary that can assure optimal ways to the worker to acquire skills and knowledge under a changing scenario through proper guidance and backup of the organization.

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