

STRESS AND WELL BEING AT WORK

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ABSTRACT:

The assignment is about stress and about well being at work. How employees communicate and how communication is important in order to improve the performance of an employee. How the punishment, learning , reinforcement and extinction is defined in psychology and how do these impact while working at organization. The present work aims to investigate the relation between appraisals, emotions, and emotion regulation strategies.How stress , strain impact the working ability of employees and how they could be motivated by the appraisals. How diversity impacts the working ability of employees . The above all topic is covered well in my paper.

Reinforcement

The most effective way to teach a person or animal a new behavior is with positive reinforcement. In positive reinforcement, a desirable stimulus is added to increase a behavior.

For example, you tell your five-year-old son, Jerome, that if he cleans his room, he will get a toy. Jerome quickly cleans his room because he wants a new art set. Let's pause for a moment. Some people might say, "Why should I reward my child for doing what is expected?" But in fact we are constantly and consistently rewarded in our lives. Our paychecks are rewards, as are high grades and acceptance into our preferred school. Being praised for doing a good job and for passing a driver's test is also a reward. Positive reinforcement as a learning tool is extremely effective. It has been found that one of the most effective ways to increase achievement in school districts with below-average reading scores was to pay the children to read. Specifically, second-grade students in Dallas were paid \$2 each time they read a book and passed a short quiz about the book. The result was a significant increase in reading comprehension (Fryer, 2010). What do you think about this program? If Skinner were alive today, he would probably think this was a great idea. He was a strong proponent of using operant conditioning principles to influence students' behavior at school. In fact, in addition to the Skinner box, he also invented what he called a teaching machine that was designed to reward small steps in learning (Skinner, 1961)—an early forerunner of computer-assisted learning. His teaching machine tested students' knowledge as they worked through various school subjects. If students answered questions correctly, they received immediate positive reinforcement and could continue; if they answered incorrectly, they did not receive any reinforcement. The idea was that students would spend additional time studying the material to increase their chance of being reinforced the next time (Skinner, 1961).

In negative reinforcement, an undesirable stimulus is removed to increase a behavior. For

example, car manufacturers use the principles of negative reinforcement in their seatbelt systems, which go “beep, beep, beep” until you fasten your seatbelt. The annoying sound stops when you exhibit the desired behavior, increasing the likelihood that you will buckle up in the future.

Negative reinforcement is also used frequently in horse training. Riders apply pressure—by pulling the reins or squeezing their legs—and then remove the pressure when the horse performs the desired behavior, such as turning or speeding up. The pressure is the negative stimulus that the horse wants to remove.

Punishment

Many people confuse negative reinforcement with punishment in operant conditioning, but they are two very different mechanisms. Remember that reinforcement, even when it is negative, always increases a behavior. In contrast, punishment always decreases a behavior. In positive punishment, you add an undesirable stimulus to decrease a behavior. An example of positive punishment is scolding a student to get the student to stop texting in class. In this case, a stimulus (the reprimand) is added in order to decrease the behavior (texting in class). In negative punishment, you remove a pleasant stimulus to decrease a behavior. For example, when a child misbehaves, a parent can take away a favorite toy. In this case, a stimulus (the toy) is removed in order to decrease the behavior.

Learning is a process that:

1. is active - process of engaging and manipulating objects, experiences, and conversations in order to build mental models of the world (Dewey, 1938; Piaget, 1964; Vygotsky, 1986). Learners build knowledge as they explore the world around them, observe and interact with phenomena, converse and engage with others, and make connections between new ideas and prior understandings.

2. builds on prior knowledge - and involves enriching, building on, and changing existing understanding, where “one’s knowledge base is a scaffold that supports the construction of all future learning” (Alexander, 1996, p. 89).
3. occurs in a complex social environment - and thus should not be limited to being examined or perceived as something that happens on an individual level. Instead, it is necessary to think of learning as a social activity involving people, the things they use, the words they speak, the cultural context they’re in, and the actions they take (Bransford, et al., 2006; Rogoff, 1998), and that knowledge is built by members in the activity (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006).
4. is situated in an authentic context - provides learners with the opportunity to engage with specific ideas and concepts on a need-to-know or want-to-know basis (Greeno, 2006; Kolodner, 2006).
5. requires learners’ motivation and cognitive engagement to be sustained when learning complex ideas, because considerable mental effort and persistence are necessary.

The conditions for inputs to learning are clear, but the process is incomplete without making sense of what outputs constitute learning has taken place. At the core, learning is a process that results in a change in knowledge or behavior as a result of experience.

Understanding what it takes to get that knowledge in and out (or promote behavioral change of a specific kind) can help optimize learning.

Extinction refers to a procedure used in Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) in which reinforcement that is provided for problem behavior (often unintentionally) is discontinued in order to decrease or eliminate occurrences of these types of negative (or problem) behaviors.

While this procedure is most commonly used in children with Autism and Down

Syndrome, it can also be used very successfully to address a broader array of problem behaviors, including those exhibited by individuals without developmental disabilities.

Extinction procedures often take three different forms depending upon the functions of the behavior (i.e. What is causing the behavior). One of the forms is to use extinction with behaviors maintained by positive reinforcement.

Example: Dannie tries to get mom's attention by dropping her toy on the floor. Her mom smiles at Dannie, picks up the toy and hands it back to her. This series of actions reinforces Dannie's negative behavior because she is getting the attention that she is seeking. As a result, she will continue to engage in this type of behavior in order to receive the positive reinforcement that her mom provides. To address this problem, Dannie's mom should ignore Dannie when she drops the toy; if she consistently ignores this problem behavior, it is highly likely that Dannie will reduce engaging in this behavior as her actions no longer produce the effect that she is seeking.

Another form of this procedure is extinction on behaviors maintained by negative reinforcement. This is commonly referred to as "escape extinction."

Example: Dannie throws a tantrum when she doesn't want to eat her food. Her mom responds by sending her to a 'corner' for time out. Because Dannie is able to avoid eating the food that she doesn't want to eat, it is highly likely that she will engage in the same behavior in the future. To correct this, Dannie's mom should let Dannie throw tantrums (regardless of how long it takes), while continuing to insist that Dannie eat her food. Initially, these tantrums will increase as Dannie becomes more and more frustrated, but eventually her tantrums will decrease

as long as her actions do not provide her with the desired outcome.

The third form of this procedure is extinction on behaviors maintained by automatic reinforcement. This is commonly referred to as “sensory extinction.”

Example: Dannie likes to turn the light switch on and off because she is visually stimulated by the fan starting and stopping. In order to address this behavior, Dannie’s mom should disable the fan so that when Dannie flips on the light switch, she no longer gets the visual stimulation from the fan starting and stopping. Over time, Dannie will decrease engaging in this behavior of flipping the light switch because it no longer provides the automatic reinforcement she is seeking.

Performance appraisal is evaluating an employee’s current and/or past performance relative to his or her performance standard.

– Gary Dessler

Performance appraisal is the systematic evaluation of employees with respect to their performance on their job and their potential for development. In other words, it is the process of measuring productivity in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

It evaluates the contribution of each employee to the accomplishment of company’s goals. Other than this, performance appraisal has several other uses, which are as follows.

Evaluation



The major purpose of performance appraisal is to evaluate how well employees have conducted their duty. Performance appraisal helps to keep a record of each employee's job performance, including what efforts they have made and what have they achieved. Evaluation differentiates employees on the basis of their job performance, along with other factors like personality, behavior, etc.

Provide continuous feedback

It is essential for the employers to know what performance and achievements have been made by their employees. But it is also equally important for an employee to know where they stand, where they are going and how they are going to get there. Thus, giving feedback to employees is also a major purpose of performance appraisal.

Measure performance accurately

Every company has to set mutually acceptable criteria or performance standards so that it

could compare employee's performance with it. This helps in accurate measurement of employee's job performance which is necessary for the company to know where it is heading towards.

By using a wide range of perspectives, 360-degree feedback allows employees to gain a more thorough understanding of their impact on people they interact with every day. Individuals tend to judge others based on their own experiences and expectations, which can skew results. Supervisors, for example, may judge employees based on their output, while co-workers judge others based on their pleasantness, and subordinates judge supervisors based on their fairness. Combining perceptions from all of these viewpoints helps provide a more complete analysis. Multiple perspectives also lend credibility to the results of 360-degree feedback, making appraisal results more meaningful to the one being reviewed and increasing the likelihood that it will result in real behavioral change.

For generations, supervisors across every industry have been dogged by a similar question during the review process: How can feedback, both positive and negative, be delivered in a way that actually makes employee performance improve? How can constructive criticism be delivered without de-motivating employees, and how can praise be delivered in a way that supports continued growth? What makes an employee take feedback to heart without taking it personally? What makes feedback stick, last, add value, and bring real change?

There are no simple answers to these questions, but while HR departments search and wait for a collective epiphany, here are five key points that managers and supervisors need to keep in mind:

1. The value of feedback stays high when channels remain open.

A sudden blast of unaccustomed feedback once a year, whether positive or negative, isn't

likely to have much impact on long term performance. A manager who rarely offers feedback will eventually seem disconnected from an employee's daily activities. And how much can praise or criticism mean when it comes from someone with little knowledge of what we actually do? When feedback is rare, it's jarring, questionable, and ultimately dismissible. Especially the negative kind.

On the other hand, regular doses of meaningful feedback build trust on both sides. Trust leads to credibility, and credibility leads to open ears and a calm, flexible response to performance assessment. Regular feedback transforms the process from an intimidating event to an every-day communication tool. Think of feedback and constant nudges keeping employees on-track and helping them to reach their goals.

2. Employees appreciate it more than managers may realize.

A manager may spend an hour searching for a way to phrase criticism delicately while, meanwhile, an employee continues to fumble in the dark, wanting nothing more than a clear indication that she is or isn't on the right track. Employees are often less concerned with displays of approval than they are with doing a good job. Don't underestimate their resilience. Most employees WANT to learn, want to improve, and want continuous feedback.

3. Don't expect employees to read between the lines.

This is a common practice. Managers are hesitant to confront employees or simply do not make the time to properly plan or schedule proper feedback sessions. Instead, they make a comment or sent a small email and sandwich the feedback in other content. Employees cannot be expected to analyze their supervisor's words or intents – and for good reason. No organization wants their employees spending time deducing meaning. If managers have something relevant and productive to say – positive or constructive – have on with it and be clear.

4. Be timely, specific, and focus on behavior.

The best employee feedback is timely, specific, and focuses on behavior and not the person or the intent. Solution-oriented feedback revolves around managers being committed to development and improvement rather than stone sold critique. Vague comments leave room for employee confusion and interpretation and feedback that isn't timely can be a complete waste of time if the incident or project has passed.

5. Feedback represents valuable data, but only when it's handled properly.

No matter how it's collected or received, feedback represents a two-way data stream between a company and an employee. And like any form of data, feedback will have more value if it's stored, managed, and aggregated effectively.

Stress is the unconscious preparation to fight or flee that a person experiences when faced with any demand. Distress is the adverse psychological, physical, behavioral, and organizational consequences that may arise as a result of stressful events. Strain is the same as distress.

Organizational Stressors.

There are four broad categories of organizational stressors: task demands, physical demands, role demands, and interpersonal demands. 1. Task demands are stressors associated with the specific task or job the person is performing. ... Physical demands are stressors associated with the job setting. Role demands are stressors associated with a particular position in a group or organization. Examples are role ambiguity and the various role conflicts that people experience in groups. 4. Interpersonal demands are stressors associated with the characteristics of the relationships that confront people in organizations. Difficult situations dealing with other people (communication, relationship, etc.) (Interpersonal) may become a stressor when it is perceived as a threat to one's well-being or position in life.

Explanation:

The situations that become stressors vary from person to person. While some things tend to stress many people—job demands, relationship conflicts, a hectic schedule—not every potential stressor causes stress in everyone. Everyone has a unique set of understanding of the world around them and ways of perceiving things. What seems like a threat to one person may be perceived as a challenge to another. So, you really can't generalize what situations are stressors.

Sample conversations illustrate the suggestions. Barriers include fear, not listening, defensive behavior, dealing with feelings, poor feedback, and helping by telling someone how to do something. Good communication skills include turning fear to trust, actively listening, expressing feelings, keeping feedback constructive and leading people to help themselves. These skills also aid in home relationships.

1. Watch Your Posture

You may think that words are all there is to communicate, but your body posture speaks volumes as well. In any face to face communication experience, you should purpose to maintain a relaxed and open posture. Stand or sit upright, and face your audience.

2. Maintain Eye Contact

A lot has been said about the importance of maintaining eye contact while talking to others, and this importance is not overrated. Maintaining eye contact shows respect for your audience. It shows sincerity, truth and conviction in what you are saying. It also opens you up to vulnerability, which in turn makes people more likely to trust you. One cannot overemphasize just how important eye contact is during communication.

3. Choose Your Words Well

Words are the medium through which you get your message across, so you ought to choose them wisely. Consider your audience as you choose your words, and only use those that are appropriate. If you are talking with a customer or client, get rid of the jargon associated with your particular line of work. If you are talking to young children, keep your vocabulary simple.

4. Be Audible

Audibility is essential during communication. If people can't hear what you are saying, there is a good chance they can't understand it as well. Purpose to be audible when addressing others. Let them hear your words clearly without having to struggle. If you are addressing a huge gathering, then use microphone. Just be sure that people can actually hear you.

5. Listen

Communication is two- way. It is the exchange of information between two or more parties. In as much as you want your audience to get your message, you should also aim at getting theirs. Don't talk all the time. Take time to reflect on what they are saying. Internalize it.

There is no denying the fact that having effective face to face communication skills can be something of a challenge. But if you follow the tips above, you should consistently see your skills improving. Maintain eye contact. Make sure you are audible. Listen to the other party. Choose your words well. If you do all the above, you will have an easy time improving your face-to-face and online communication skills.

1. Be on time

Nothing says that a meeting is not important more than turning up late to it. Not sticking to the allocated time schedule in a meeting also shows a lack of respect for other people's time.

Be aware of the message that you are sending.

2. Stay on topic

An agenda should be driven by action and sent to attendees in advance. If an item comes up for discussion that is not on the agenda make a note to discuss it during General Business or schedule it in for another time.

3. Voice of success

The energy in your voice can give clues to the message that you are sending.

- Are you delivering your point with confidence?
- Does your message sound positive or negative?
- How can you use your voice inflections to emphasise your point?
- What feeling is your tone of voice reflecting?

4. Word choice

Your choice of words and language in a meeting can sometimes persuade opinions to go in your favour or do the reverse. Be mindful when choosing your words and avoid language that makes assumptions or discriminates.

5. Watch your body language

Body language is just as important as verbal communication. It provides clues to your attitude and state of mind – be conscious of the message that you're sending with your body language.

- Are you slouching in your chair?
- Are you using eye contact to include everyone?
- Are your arms crossed defensively?

6. Listen

When you are not speaking make sure that you are practising good listening skills. Communication is a two-way process. Actively listening to your colleagues can help you to

better understand and communicate with them.

7. Avoid distractions

Following the agenda and staying within the timeframe of each action point will help you to stay focused. Have water at hand to remain hydrated and put your phone away to avoid external distractions.

Good meetings require good participants and good leaders. All attendees should be prepared and ready to communicate effectively in order to make the meeting as productive and constructive as possible.

“Culture is the pattern of taken-for-granted assumptions about how a given collection of people should think, act, and feel as they go about their daily affairs”

-Joynt & Warner, 1996

The way you communicate is affected by the culture you were brought up in. The opposite is also true. Culture is, to a large extent, determined by the way we communicate.

Causes of Cultural Barriers

Language

There are billions of people in the world who do not understand English or cannot communicate in English properly. Not speaking properly can cause various misunderstandings and be a barrier to communication.

Different cultures have developed their own language as a part of their heritage. People are comfortable communicating in their own language whereas have to work hard to learn new languages.

For example, separation of East and West Germany for 40 years caused the language to differ a lot. The dialect became very different as people of East Germany had an influence of

Russian language whereas West Germany had influence of English. They had a barrier in communicating with each other for decades

Signs and Symbols (Semantics)

Non-verbal communication cannot be relied upon in communication between people from different cultures as that is also different like language. Signs, symbols and gestures varies in different cultures.

For example, the sign “thumbs up” is taken as a sign of approval and wishing luck in most of the cultures but is taken as an insult in Bangladesh. Similarly, the “V” hand gesture with palm faced outside or inside means victory and peace in the US, but back of hand facing someone showing the sign is taken as insulting in many cultures.

The culture sets some meanings of signs like the ones mentioned above, which might not be the same in other cultures.

Stereotypes and Prejudices

Stereotyping is the process of creating a picture of a whole culture, overgeneralizing all people belonging to the same culture as having similar characteristics and categorizing people accordingly. It is a belief about a certain group and is mostly negative.

Stereotyping can be done on the basis of many things like nationality, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, age, etc.

For example, Asian students are stereotyped to be good at Math which is a positive stereotype. But there is also cultural stereotype of all people following a particular religion as being violent like Islam and is negative stereotyping.

Behavior and Beliefs

Cultural differences cause behavior and personality differences like body language,

thinking, communication, manners, norms, etc. which leads to miscommunication.

For example, in some cultures eye contact is important whereas in some it is rude and disrespectful.

Culture also sets a specific norm which dictates behavior as they have guidelines for accepted behavior. It explains what is right and wrong. Every action is influenced by culture like ambitions, careers, interests, values, etc. Beliefs are also another cause for cultural barrier.

Ethnocentrism



Ethnocentrism is the process of dividing cultures as “us” and “them”.

The people of someone’s own culture are categorized as in-group and the other culture is out-group. There is always greater preference to in-group. There is an illusion of out-group as evil and inferior. This evaluation is mostly negative.

If the culture is similar to us, then it is good and if is dissimilar, it is bad. Other’s culture is evaluated and assessed with the standard being their own culture. Ethnocentrism affects the understanding of message, and encourages hostility.

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