

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269998078>

Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration

Article in *Journal of Contemporary Religion* · January 2015

DOI: 10.1080/13537903.2015.987013

CITATIONS

0

READS

3,872

1 author:



[Suzanne Newcombe](#)

The Open University (UK)

32 PUBLICATIONS 275 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

This article was downloaded by: [LSE Library Services]

On: 08 May 2015, At: 03:56

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Contemporary Religion

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjcr20>

Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration

Suzanne Newcombe^a

^a INFORM (Information Network on Religious Movements), London
Published online: 23 Dec 2014.



CrossMark

[Click for updates](#)

To cite this article: Suzanne Newcombe (2015) Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration, Journal of Contemporary Religion, 30:1, 176-178, DOI: [10.1080/13537903.2015.987013](https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2015.987013)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2015.987013>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms &

Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained Through Meditation and Concentration

KNUT A. JACOBSEN, 2012

Leiden & Boston, MA: Brill

Brill's Indological Library 37

xii + 519 pp., €147.00, \$196.00 (hb)

ISBN 978-90-04-21214-5

Flying, mind-reading, levitation, astral travel, controlling forces of nature, entering another's body at will, defying aging and death, killing enemies at a distance—all these and more have been tantalisingly promised as 'extraordinary capacities attained through mediation and concentration' in the Indian traditions. The allure and danger of 'yogic powers' are discussed in Jain, Buddhist, Sufi, and 'Hindu' religious texts; a variety of positions are taken on how the aspirant should relate to these powers. Knut A. Jacobsen has helpfully put together a collection of essays that testify to the breadth and historical complexity of this subject, which is a focus of great curiosity for many students of Religious Studies. In some texts and traditions, obtaining 'yogic powers' is seen as a valid goal in its own right, while in other traditions, such as Sāṃkhya, yogic powers are seen as a dangerous distraction from the goal of liberation. This volume is an ambitious attempt to deal with the breadth of traditions which discuss the existence of 'super-mundane' yogic powers.

The volume is not ideally focused for those primarily interested in the study of contemporary religions. The entire project is firmly conceptualised within the discipline of Indology and much time is spent discussing terminology and the mutation of terms and meanings through texts and traditions. Some of the chapters lack analytical focus and are overly descriptive; this could have been minimised with a stricter word limit and a tighter editorial hand. Nevertheless, this collection is a valuable effort which brings together experts on a diversity of religious traditions and Jacobsen's effort to create a comprehensive treatment of 'yogic powers' will be appreciated by those attempting to get an overview of this concept. Of particular interest to scholars of contemporary religion is the chapter by Ramdas Lamb on the working understanding of yogic powers in the contemporary Rāmānanda Sampradāy. Also worth noting is Jacobsen's chapter on the living Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition of Hariharānanda Āraṇya (1869–1947) and the Kāpil Maṭh, as is Jeffrey J. Kripal's chapter which considers the use of *siddhis* and tantric traditions in the Human Potential Movement.

However, the bulk of the research rests on close analysis of specific texts and historical traditions as understood from extant literature. Beginning this historical framework is Angelika Malinar's chapter which considers the treatment of yogic powers throughout the *Mahābhārata*. She argues that the epic sees powers as inseparable from yoga and the journey towards liberation, even if it is widely believed that the powers themselves can also act as distraction and impediment. David Gordon White's chapter challenges the marginalisation of magical powers in the yoga traditions by arguing that an assumption that accomplished yogis can "move between, inhabit and even create multiple bodies" is central to many Yoga, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Jain, and Buddhist texts (74).

Yogic Powers in the Buddhist traditions are considered in several chapters: Bradley S. Clough considers treatment of yogic powers (*abhiññās*) in the Pāli Buddhist canon; he lists many supernatural abilities attributed to accomplished Buddhist practitioners while noting that there are very few descriptions of how to accomplish such 'super-mundane' acts. David V. Fiordalis compares and contrasts the 'miracles' of Vimalakīri as described in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* with other Mahāyāna Indian Buddhist discourses on superhuman powers and concludes that displays of magical powers are seen as an integral part of the 'skilful means' employed by Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* to liberate others. Ryan Richard Overbey analyses the Chinese translations of Indian Buddhist texts for the use of the term *siddhi*. He concludes that, before the rise of Tantric Buddhism from the seventh century onwards, the word was only used to refer to the 'accomplishment' towards the goal of liberation and asserts that it is only in later texts that the term *siddhis* became associated with specific extraordinary powers gained through "religious practise, incantations, drugs, or other means" (128).

The discourses on power and *siddhi* in classical Sāṃkhya-Yoga, the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali and greater *yogaśāstra* (commentaries) are considered by Stuart Ray Sarbacker, Christopher Key Chapple, and Lloyd W. Pflueger. A variety of interpretations of the *siddhi* powers are offered by Sarbacker, while he emphasises the importance of self-transformation and the concept of the numinous in the tradition. Chapple emphasises the yogic goals of transcendence and purification while affirming the importance of freedom that the descriptions of *siddhi* imply. Pflueger takes an interesting experiential approach, directing the reader to experiment with breath control, power, purity, and balance in the act of reading the chapter. When compared and contrasted, these chapters might stimulate interesting classroom discussions on the goals of classical yogic practices, Sāṃkhya-Yoga philosophy, and the methodological problems of religious studies as a discipline.

Textual views about yogic powers, power-seekers, and concepts of identity in the tantric Śaiva traditions are outlined by Somadeva Vasudeva. Following this chapter, Sthaneshwar Timalsina offers a close analysis of the figure and yogic practices of Bhuṣuṇḍa, an immortal liberated being (*jīvanmukta*), as described in the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, a text that is difficult to place within a specific time or tradition. The concepts of *siddhi* and *mahāsiddhi* in early *haṭhayoga* texts are considered by James Mallinson who emphasises the focus on liberation rather than enjoyment of power in the tradition, while noting possible exceptions to this trend in the literature.

Miracle working by saints in hagiographical literature of the overlapping Sufi and *Bhakti* traditions of India is considered by both Patton Burchett and Antonio Rigopoulos. Burchett emphasises that the tales of miracles by saints can be theologically positioned in opposition to tantric asceticism and magic associated with Nāth yogis of northern India; he argues that this literature can be read as drawing clear distinctions between magic and religion. The hagiographical literature about Sāi Bābā of Śīrḍī and his reported miracles are described in depth by Rigopoulos's chapter which extends to over 46 pages.

There are some odd publishing errors in the edition of this volume. The editor's first name was omitted from the cover of the volume, giving the name as 'A. Jacobsen' rather than 'Knut A. Jacobsen'. More significantly, the text stops

in the middle of Jacobsen's very interesting essay: at this point, 16 pages (470–86) have been replaced by pages relating to the borrowing of Arabic verbs in Swahili, which must belong to an entirely different book. This unfortunate publishing error also cuts out the first nine pages of Kripal's reflections on *siddhis* in the contemporary Human Potential Movement. Hopefully, other editions of this volume will not be subject to the same problems.

However, there is much for the scholar of contemporary religions to ponder in this volume which showcases the diversity of historical interpretations of 'yogic powers'. Contemporary movements often claim a direct lineage with ancient traditions to manifest special abilities through unique practices, e.g. levitation by Transcendental Meditation practitioners. Jacobsen's valuable collection complicates emic narratives by showing the rich, contested, and complex roles that 'superhuman' abilities have played across Asian traditions.

SUZANNE NEWCOMBE

INFORM (Information Network on Religious Movements), London, UK

© 2014 Suzanne Newcombe

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2015.987013>

Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels

VALERIE WEAVER-ZERCHER, 2013

Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press

Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies

315 pp., US\$50.00 (hb), US\$24.95 (pb)

ISBN 978-1-4214-0890-3 (hb), ISBN 978-1-4214-0891-0 (pb), ISBN 978-1-4214-0892-7 (eb)

One might think, as Valerie Weaver-Zercher suggests in her book *Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels*, that an examination of a sub-genre of inspirational fiction, about a religious community comprising less than one tenth of one percent of the population of the United States, has a "very narrow purview" (244). However, while the staggering popularity of Amish romance alludes to their significance and scope (in 2012, a new publication reached the bookstores every four days in the US; writers Beverly Lewis, Wanda Brunsetter, and Cindy Woodsmall have, together, made 24 million sales), Weaver-Zercher's astute analysis of this mass appeal confirms the importance of looking at the uses and users of Christian fiction, as markers of contemporary religion.

Thrill of the Chaste opens by offering a 'DNA' of popular Amish romance, which traces the tropes of "rural particularism", "romance", and "evangelical piety" (27) used in the *genre* of nineteenth-century novels and helpfully introduces the authors dominating the bestseller lists. Weaver-Zercher then identifies four central traits of Amish fiction that reveal their success. As "commodities", they are products of an efficient network of authors, publicists,



Subject : Human Rights & Duties

Productin of Courseware
e-Content for Post Graduate Courses

Paper : Philosophical Foundations of human rights, duties and responsibilities

Module : Philosophical Foundations of human rights



ePathshala पाठशाला

MHRD Govt. of India

Development Team

Principal Investigator:	Prof. (Dr.) YSR Murthy, Executive Director, Centre for Human Rights Studies, OP Jindal Global University
Paper Coordinator:	Prof. (Dr.) YSR Murthy, Executive Director, Centre for Human Rights Studies, OP Jindal Global University
Content Writer:	Prof. (Dr.) YSR Murthy, Executive Director, Centre for Human Rights Studies, OP Jindal Global University
Content Reviewer:	Dr. Varalaxmi Moganty, Formerly with Andhra University

Description of Module	
Subject Name	Human Rights and Duties
Paper Name	Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights, duties and responsibilities
Module Name/Title	Philosophical Foundations of human rights
Module Id	11
Pre-requisites	
Objectives	
Keywords	

 **Pathshala**
पाठशाला
A Gateway to All Post Graduate Courses

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Learning Outcomes

- To gain an insight into the philosophical foundations of human rights.
- To understand the various sources of moral foundations of human rights and explore the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings.

Introduction

The debate around the idea of human rights has gone on for a long time in different parts of the world. It took centuries for the humankind to realise the true worth of a human being so as to have a better understanding of the concept of human rights. The history of this struggle is replete with accounts of brutal regimes characterised by practices like prejudice, discrimination, exploitation, oppression, enslavement, persecution, torture and extermination. Still, the notion of human rights did not become a universal idea where there was any coherent position.

The Second World War changed this narrative forever. And since then, the body of international human rights law has seen tremendous growth. With the growth and evolution of the body of human rights doctrine, it has also been observed that the idea of human rights has found acceptance in the world. Today, when we review the developments in the post-UN charter period, we find that more than 70 legally binding international human rights conventions and 30 non-binding standards have been adopted by the UN General Assembly in the little over seven decades of UN's existence. They constitute rules in the international level to regulate the conduct of States.¹

Even after this remarkable growth and acceptance of the human rights doctrine, the search for its philosophical foundations continues to be debated. There is a school of thought which argues that for gaining universal acceptance, the philosophical underpinnings of the idea of human rights needs to be uncovered.

However, this thought is severely contested by another school of thought which argues that it is unnecessary to get into the debate of philosophical foundations. The premise of this argument is that the

¹ Miguel Vatter, Politico-Theological Foundations of Universal Human Rights: The Case of Maritain, Social Research, Vol. 80, No. 1, Political Theology? (SPRING 2013), pp. 233-260

world has already made huge progress towards accepting the idea of human rights and hence, any debate in this regard would be inconsequential.

The world is huge and complex. There are different types of political regimes. One finds monarchy, dictatorship, democracy, communist rule so and so forth. Protection and promotion of human rights is closely associated with the type of political regime in place. In addition to this, when we review in terms of culture, the world is not a homogenous place. How can one moral human rights doctrine have a universal applicability in the backdrop of tremendous diversity? These are few of the key questions that this module seeks to examine and address.

Need for Philosophical Foundations

As mentioned earlier, the human rights doctrine has gained a strong foothold in the world as a result of the numerous enactments under the aegis of the United Nations and other bodies. The body of international human rights law as it stands is very different from what it was 70 years ago.

This brief historical overview and context of the present status of the idea of human rights begs the question- whether it is at all fruitful to indulge in an exploration of the philosophical foundations. Philosophers and political theorists have been arguing for very long that the human rights theory needs to be strengthened with philosophical foundations.

It is well-established that several social movements and revolutions have contributed to the development of the current understanding of the idea of human rights. Although, it is said that the international human rights law has its roots in the western worldview, it is equally true that the notion of human rights has been enriched through the contributions of all parts of the world.

Therefore, the body of human rights doctrine, that we currently have, is a symbolic of the “overlapping consensus” around the notion of human dignity. It is but natural that there is a complex web of theoretical and philosophical underpinnings beneath this structure.

Each milestone in the history of development of human rights contributed towards the theoretical framework of the human rights doctrine. This is precisely the reason why it is even more difficult to arrive at a definitive conclusion as to what exactly is the philosophical foundation of human rights.

Even though there have been many contestations regarding the notion of philosophical foundations of human rights, the questions have continued to maintain their relevance. Do human rights have philosophical underpinnings? Is it necessary that they have one?

In this context, Jerome Shestack questions whether there is any need for identifying the philosophical foundations of human rights. Listing several reasons for such an enterprise, Shestack points out that there is better adherence to human rights law when one understands the moral justifications that underlie that law. It is also necessary for people across the world, with great diversity in terms of culture, to transcend these differences and speak to each other. Shestack is essentially encouraging conversation around this subject so as to advocate the universal recognition of international law principles.

Scholars like Sheshtak have long argued that addressing this normative question regarding the philosophical foundations of human rights is very critical. Such an enquiry calls for a large debate in the world which may or may not end up giving the rights answers. At several points in the history of the modern human rights doctrine, there has been a huge backlash against the idea of universality of human rights.

While there is one section which argues that the core human rights treaties constitute the de-facto “basic law” for the modern world, there is significant opposition to this idea as well. As a result of this contestation, the idea of cultural relativism took birth. Over the years, there have been several ups and downs with respect to the acceptance of this argument of the cultural relativists. However, the relevance is very much there and hence, there is a need to engage with them. The principal argument of the concept of cultural relativism “*lies in the hypothesis that every culture has humanitarian ideals or principles that could contribute to the redefining and promotion of universal standards as the latter adopt local and national standards.*”²

It is important to highlight here that the primary reason for the yearning of philosophical foundations is to advance the cause of universalism of human rights as a doctrine. It can only happen when the two factions of this debate, namely- the universalists and cultural relativists arrive at a normative consensus about the philosophical foundations.

² Francis Deng, “A Cultural Approach to Human Rights Among the Dinka,” in Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im and Francis Deng, *Human Rights in Africa: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (Washington D.C., Brookings, Institution, 1990) at 261.

Sheshtack said the following behind the need to understand the philosophical foundations:

“How one understands meaning of human rights will influence one's judgment on such issues which rights are regarded as universal, which should be given priority, which can be overruled by other interests, which call for international pressures, which can demand programs for implementation, and for which one will fight.

What is meant by human rights? To speak of human rights requires a conception of what rights one possesses by virtue of being human.

That does not mean human rights in the self-evident sense that those who have them are human, but rather, the rights that human beings have simply because they are human beings and independent of their varying social circumstances and degrees of merit.”³

Essentially, Sheshtack is arguing that settling the debate around the philosophical foundations is extremely necessary so as to make the idea of human rights truly universal in nature.

The Discipline of Philosophy and Notion of Human Rights.

It is a widely held view that philosophy is a discipline which deals with abstract concepts. Much of the academic knowledge produced by this discipline is an outcome of rigorous intellectual discourse which seldom has any practical application for the real world. Human rights activists regularly raise this issue that indulging in a debate about the philosophical foundations does not serve the cause of the advancing human dignity. Rather, the human rights activists exhort the institutional and legislative mechanism to continue with the development of the human rights doctrine and take it to the level where all sections of the world can be brought under its umbrella.

The key difference of opinion between the two sections-human rights theorists and activists has been aptly articulated by Michael Freeman in the following words:

“The concept of human rights raises problems that are, on the one practical and urgent, and, on the other hand, theoretical and abstract. human rights proponents and academics whose work is oriented activism, the concept connotes the prevention of political murders,

³ Jerome J. Shestack, The Philosophic Foundations of Human Rights, Human Rights Quarterly, Vol. 20, No. 2 (May, 1998), pp. 201-234

*pearances," torture, and unjust imprisonment. The concept of human also raises theoretical issues about the requirements of legitimate means and the nature of the good life. It is widely recognized that these dimensions of human rights work exist and should, in principle, integrated with one another. This integration, however, can prove difficult practice. For activists, the pressure of rescuing fellow human-beings actual and imminent injustice relegates theoretical questions priority. Those who look to philosophers and political theorists for once may be disappointed, for the theoretical disputation is inconclusive. Thus, there is a gap between human rights activism and theory."*⁴

It is very much clear from the above quote that the activists do not attach much importance to the idea of philosophical foundations of human rights. Their primary focus has been to continuously advance the cause of human rights. Several theorists have made an attempt to bridge this gap between the activists and theorists. Jack Donnelly has made significant contribution towards building this bridge with regard to this gap. Donnelly has argued:

"Human rights can be grounded in a variety of comprehensive doctrines. For example, they can be seen as encoded in the natural law, called for by divine commandment, political means to further human good or utility, or institutions to produce virtuous citizens. During the past few decades, more and more adherents of a growing range of comprehensive doctrines in all regions of the world have come to endorse human rights-but only as a political conception of justice.

Human rights, in other words, have no single philosophical or religious foundations. They instead have many such foundations that converge (but do not perfectly coincide) on the rights specified in international human rights law. Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Kantians, Utilitarians, and neo-Aristotelians come to human rights from rather different

⁴ Michael Freeman, The Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights, Human Rights Quarterly, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Aug., 1994), pp. 491-514

paths. Nonetheless, for their own varied reasons, these and most other leading doctrines today see human rights as the political expression of their deepest values.”⁵

It is well known that for any political or philosophical theory to take the final shape, it is imperative to present a logically coherent argument. To arrive at a definitive conclusion regarding the direction of the concept, it is essential to take into account all possible contradictions. In any academic discipline, it is required that there are well-defined methods of conducting such debates and analysis. It is a common practice in academic traditions to create theoretical constructs that can assist the practitioners to conduct their analysis.⁶ With this quaint introduction to the discipline of philosophy, it is now appropriate to understand the conundrum related to the idea of human rights.

There are several attributes of the idea of human rights and each has its own set of ambiguities. Another challenge for theorists working on philosophical foundations is that the notion of human rights has been primarily justified through moral arguments which are more self-evident than explicable.

Sources of Human Rights

Having laid down the need for philosophical foundations and the discipline of philosophy, it is now appropriate to undertake the journey of understanding human rights from the point of view of moral foundations. The focus of this analysis is to understand the source of moral legitimacy for the idea of human rights. Also, the ambit and nature of human rights will be explored.

As argued earlier, the journey of human rights is replete with contributions of social movements across the world and even revolutions. Each step in the evolution of human rights has been taken in a different contextual setting. Therefore, an understanding of the moral foundations is necessary from that standpoint.

In this section, an analysis of the sources of human rights is undertaken with a special emphasis of understanding the philosophical underpinnings of human rights.

1. Religious Doctrine

⁵ Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, (Cornell University Press, 1989)

⁶ Serena Parekh, *Resisting "Dull and Torpid" Assent: Returning to the Debate over the Foundations of Human Rights*, *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Aug., 2007), pp. 754-778

Before the dawn of modernity, religion was the guiding force behind political philosophy and hence, it had a huge influence on the development of the conception of human rights. While the exact term-human rights is not found in most religious texts, the underlying notion behind human rights has been deliberated in religious traditions across the world.⁷

The idea of inherent value of human life and dignity can be traced to religious scriptures. While there is enough emphasis on the rights of an individual, the religious doctrine is particularly centered around the idea of duties. Therefore, there is a world of difference between the religious conception of human rights as opposed to the understanding of the human rights in the modern world.

2. Arguments based on Natural Law

Theorists and philosophers have often looked into the Natural Law to understand the philosophical underpinnings of the idea of human rights. From ancient times to medieval times, philosophers from different parts of the world have articulated and emphasized the elementary principles of justice which are embodied in Natural Law.

John Locke is said to have given flesh and blood to this understanding of the human rights. John Locke said the following with respect to the natural law foundations and existence of human beings in the nature:

“In that state men and women were in a state of freedom, able to determine their actions, and also in a state of equality in the sense that no one was subjected to the will or authority of another. However, to end the hazards and inconveniences of the state of nature, men and women entered into a "social contract" by which they mutually agreed to form a community and set up a body politic. Still, in setting up that political authority, individuals retained the natural rights of life, liberty, and property. Government was obliged to protect the natural rights of its subjects, and if government neglected this obligation, it forfeited its validity and office.”⁸

⁷ Leonard Swidler, Religious Liberty and Human Rights: In Nations and in Religions (1986)

⁸ John Locke, The Second Treatise of Government (1952)

The most outstanding milestones in the history of human rights- the French Declaration of the Rights of Man⁹ and the American Declaration of Independence¹⁰ are a testament of the contribution of natural law in the foundation of human rights.

The whole idea of inalienable rights is an outcome of the Natural law theory only. However, the trouble has been that it is difficult to specify the normative framework that supports this idea.

Again the challenge of understanding the philosophical foundations through this school is that it becomes difficult to explain the self-evident nature of the claims which are naturally inexplicable. The natural rights theory came with a set of assumptions which were not likely to remain constant in a dynamic world and hence, this theory met with a lot of criticism on account of being highly contextual.

3. The Claims of the Positivists

The Positivists school opposed the Natural law on account of source of legitimacy of the theory of rights. It argued that a claim for legitimacy has to come from the state and then only it can have any authoritative value. Therefore, the primary source of human rights for the positivists could be discerned only through formal enactments of the law.

The Positivists school created a distinction between the different claims of legitimacy for a theory of human rights. This understanding found acceptance in developing the international framework of human rights. Although the positivists school of thought gives primacy to national sovereignty in determination of law, the whole international framework of human rights is premised on several enactments.

Therefore, it can be seen that the positivist school provides a significant contribution to the current conception of human rights. However, the contradiction regarding primacy of national sovereignty has given rise to a serious challenge to the idea of international human rights. As a result of which, the states have reserved the prerogative of giving the final shape of human rights to themselves.

4. Marxist Conception

The Marxist thought was apprehensive of the idea of human rights in its modern form for the simple reason that there was nothing natural or inalienable about the idea of human rights. The Marxist

⁹ Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens (France 1789)

¹⁰ The Declaration of independence (US 1776)

conceptualization of human rights precluded the idea of individual rights and made them contingent upon the fulfillment of obligations to the state and the society.

5. Sociological Understanding

The sociological approach laid enormous emphasis on arriving at a equilibrium of interests with regard to the prevailing moral, social and economic conditions. The sociological school looks for factual premises for having an interest before giving legitimacy to the notion of human rights.

6. Utilitarian Perspective

Classic utilitarianism, the most explored branch of this school, is a moral theory that judges the rightness of actions affecting outcomes in terms of securing the greatest happiness to all concerned.¹¹ The Utilitarian perspective also gave significance to the idea of human rights. However, it failed to recognise individual autonomy¹² and for these reasons it was held to be insufficient to explain the philosophical foundations.

Briding the gaps in the theoretical and philosophical foundation of human rights

It can be seen from the above discussion that it is enormously difficult to arrive at a definitive understanding of the human rights from a philosophical point of view. The competing principles contributing to the narrative are equally justified in their own particular context and therefore, they need to be reconciled.

Jack Donnelly has done a lot of work in this direction. Donnelly argues that owing to the current status of the universality of human rights, the debate around the philosophical foundations of human nature is more relevant rather than that of human rights. He argues that given the wide acceptance of human rights as a universally applicable concept, the philosophical debate is not as relevant as it used to be prior to the enactment of international human rights treaties. Today, a major section of the world has accepted the idea of universal human rights. Moreover, the present framework of the international human rights regime is the most inclusive form of international law-making. The testament of inclusiveness can be seen from the contribution of non-western societies in the current framework. For instance, the UDHR

¹¹ Joseph Raz, *The Morality of Freedom* 267-87 (1986)

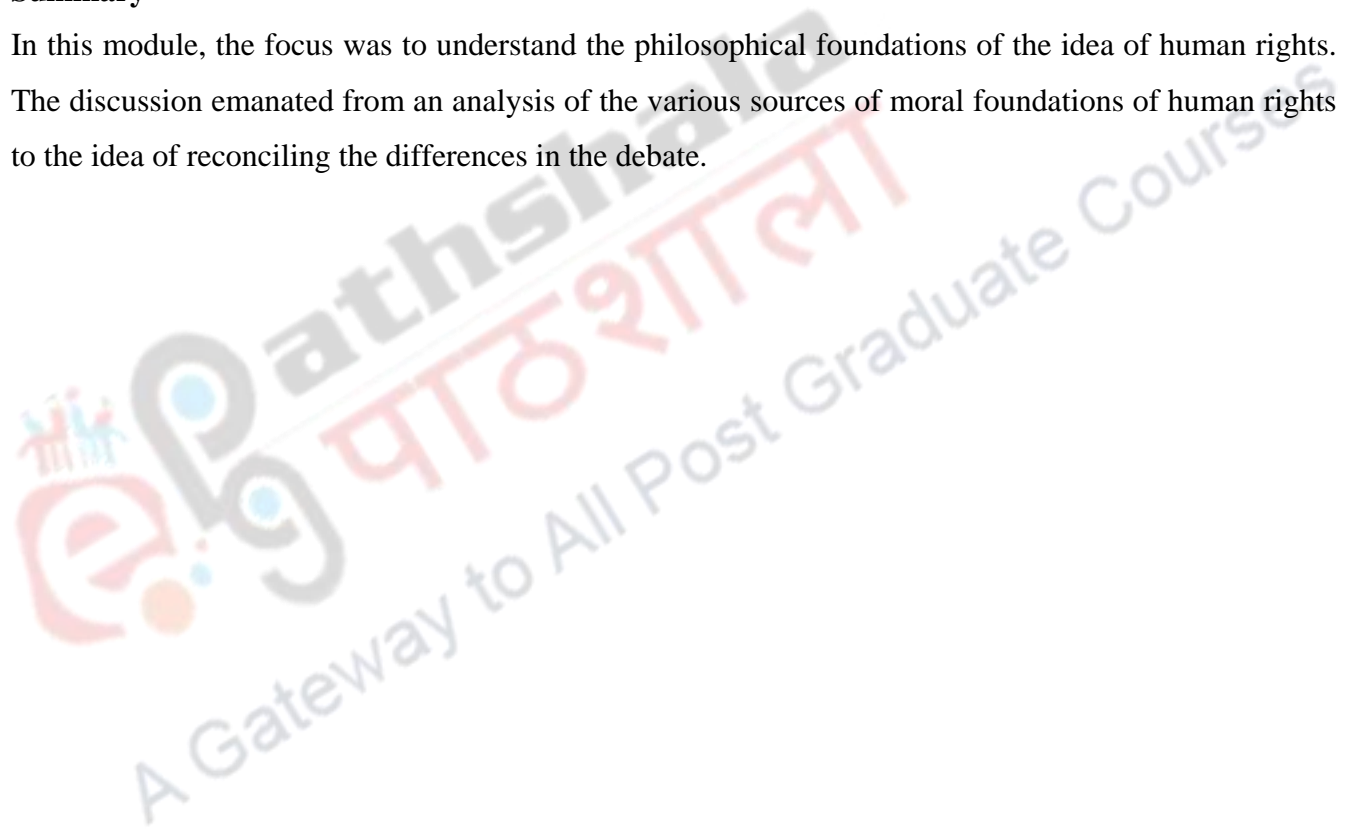
¹² John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* 187 (1971)

provides “references to economic and social rights that are not included in [most] Western documents on human rights.”

In conclusion, it must be said that the mankind has made enormous progress in adopting the current framework of human rights. The debate around the search for philosophical justifications may continue in the years to come but this debate should not be conducted in a way which inhibits the growth of international human rights law.

Summary

In this module, the focus was to understand the philosophical foundations of the idea of human rights. The discussion emanated from an analysis of the various sources of moral foundations of human rights to the idea of reconciling the differences in the debate.



Stress Management

Lack of preparation is every manager's nightmare.

Do you find yourself needing to get up to speed on a particular subject in time for an important meeting or event? Are you struggling to find both the time and the patience to track down the most appropriate material?

Then look no further than Emerald Management Briefings! Management Briefings provide you with a detailed insight into your chosen topic and comprise up to six specially-selected articles from the 40,000-strong Emerald Fulltext article database which is selected by 98% of the world's 100 top business schools as listed by the *Financial Times*.

Feeling stressed? Take a deep breath and start reading here...

The American National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines job stress as:

"The harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker."

This is not to be confused with the concept of challenge, which can be stimulating and energizing, motivating workers to learn new skills and master their jobs. Meeting a challenge gives a sense of satisfaction and relaxation. When people refer to "positive stress" these challenges are what they are usually meaning.

Health and safety organizations are taking an interest in stress because, whilst short-lived bursts of stress pose little risk to the individual, on-going or chronic stress causes undue wear and tear on the body and ultimately increases the likelihood of illness or injury. From sleep disturbance to hypertension, and from relationship problems to mental illness, the range of conditions that have been linked with workplace stress is enormous. And more and more people are reporting increased stress levels associated with their jobs.

A Northwestern National Life survey of workers found that 40% of respondents reported their jobs to be "very or extremely stressful" and 25% considered them to be the major stressor in their lives. ("Employee burnout: America's newest epidemic", Northwestern National Life Company, 1991)

Subsequently, a Families and Work Institute survey found 26% of workers who said they were often or very often burned out or stressed by work. ("The 1997 national study of the changing workforce", 1998).

(All figures from NIOSH online information at: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh>)

When it is appreciated that these statistics stem from before the current downturn in the national economy and consequent round of job cuts and business failures, present stress levels amongst managers in the US can only be guessed at!

If you suspect that you or employees in your organization may be suffering from the ill-effects of stress, take a look at our Stress Management Briefing.

Articles:

Stress management: stressors, diagnosis, and preventative measures

Stress management is a continuous process of monitoring, diagnosing, and prevention of excessive stressors that adversely affects employees, managers, and productivity. These stressors are as much a function of the environment as one's perception of the environment. Therefore, stress management is as much the responsibility of employees as it is managers.

Originally published in Management Research News Volume 27 Number 4/5, 2004

The experience of work-related stress across occupations

This article compares the experience of occupational stress across a large and diverse set of occupations. Three stress related variables (psychological well-being, physical health and job

satisfaction) are discussed and comparisons are made between 26 different occupations on each of these measures.

Originally published in the Journal of Managerial Psychology Volume 20 Number 2, 2005

Stress in business relationships

One of the causes of change in business relationships comes from incidents that deviate in a positive or negative way from the expected and normal relationship pattern. This article introduces the concept of stress that captures the effect of negatively deviating incidents in business relationships.

Originally published in the Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing Volume 20 Number 1, 2005

Managing workplace stress: how training can help

Stress is a key issue facing many organisations yet, despite the increasing awareness of how it impacts on business, many companies are unsure of the best way to fulfil their duty of care towards their employees. This article looks at how training can have a positive impact on tackling stress in the workplace.

Originally published in Industrial and Commercial Training Volume 36 Number 2, 2004

Occupational stress among managers: a Malaysian survey

This paper examines the sources of occupational stress among Malaysian managers working in multinational companies (MNCs). A total of 440 managers participated in this survey. It was found that workloads, working conditions and relationships at work were the main concern of the managers that led to stress in the workplace.

Originally published in Industrial and Commercial Training Volume 36 Number 2, 2004

New developments in managing job related stress

We spend over ten hours a day at work or on work related issues. We not only have to deal with work pressures but also juggle, personal relationships, personal finances, information technology, personal fears and changes. All these aspects of modern-day-living can be incredibly stressful.

Originally published in Equal Opportunities International Volume 22 Number 5, 2003

Managing workplace stress: how training can help

Anna Shuttleworth

The author

Anna Shuttleworth is Head of Training at Right Corecare, St Albans, UK.

Keywords

Stress, Management activities, Workplace, Training

Abstract

Stress is a key issue facing many organisations yet, despite the increasing awareness of how it impacts on business, many companies are unsure of the best way to fulfil their duty of care towards their employees. This article looks at how training can have a positive impact on tackling stress in the workplace – helping employees become more resilient towards stress, and enabling them to tackle the root causes of any problems. It highlights the importance of providing additional training for managers who not only need to manage their own stress levels, but have responsibility for their direct reports. It focuses on the case of East London and The City Mental Health Trust and how it has used training to provide support for colleagues suffering from stress caused by bullying and harassment.

Electronic access

The Emerald Research Register for this journal is available at www.emeraldinsight.com/researchregister

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available at

www.emeraldinsight.com/0019-7858.htm

Industrial and Commercial Training
Volume 36 · Number 2 · 2004 · pp. 61-65
© Emerald Group Publishing Limited · ISSN 0019-7858
DOI 10.1108/00197850410524824

Employers have a duty of care towards their employees, as specified in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Developments such as the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) draft management standards on workplace stress have highlighted the accountability employers face when tackling stress in the workplace. In addition, organisations are now genuinely buying into the fact that it is the people that offer the only real competitive advantage for a company. The war for talent is continuing, due to demographic changes, low unemployment levels and increasing priority placed on diversity, and being seen as a sympathetic and considerate employer is an advantage in itself, strengthening the employer brand.

For companies that do not take the issue of stress seriously, the consequences can be far reaching, as was seen by the HSE's recent ruling on a NHS Trust, ordering it to reduce the levels of stress faced by staff. Similarly, payouts to staff who have claimed damages for stress suffered in the workplace are significant. In May 2001 Jeffery Long, a telephone procurement manager for Mercury Mobile Communication Services, claimed damages after a nervous breakdown caused by a campaign of victimisation and demotion after he blew the whistle on mismanagement – he was awarded £327,000 (source: Personneltoday.com – 21 October 2003). In February 2000, a former Post Office manager won damages (£175,000) for stress-related illness caused by an excessive workload. The manager suffered depression following a business review that greatly increased workload and responsibilities (source: Personneltoday.com – 21 October 2003).

How can organisations keep their workforce safe and well?

The HSE draft management standards recommend some specific targets that organisations should seek to attain, for example, at least 65 per cent of employees must indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours (such as bullying) at work. Moreover, systems should be in place locally to respond to any individual concerns. Alongside



the framework provided by the HSE, “managing pressure” training is an excellent mechanism to proactively address workplace stress. This, however, is not without its pitfalls; there can be a temptation for organisations to believe that an off-the-shelf course delivered en masse will mean that they have fulfilled their duty of care. Simply having all employees attend a training event does not necessarily translate into an improved workplace. The following guidelines will help to ensure that the maximum value is gained from a training investment.

Start with a coherent framework

A key factor underpinning a successful training intervention is a coherent framework (see Figure 1). This may be in the form of a wellbeing policy, which sets out what the organisation intends to do to manage stress and promote wellbeing. The policy should define stress, specify the organisation’s commitment to managing it, highlight how this will be achieved and outline responsibilities throughout the organisation. An effective policy can be created by following the HSE guidelines on stress,

which can be found on the HSE’s Web site (www.hse.gov.uk).

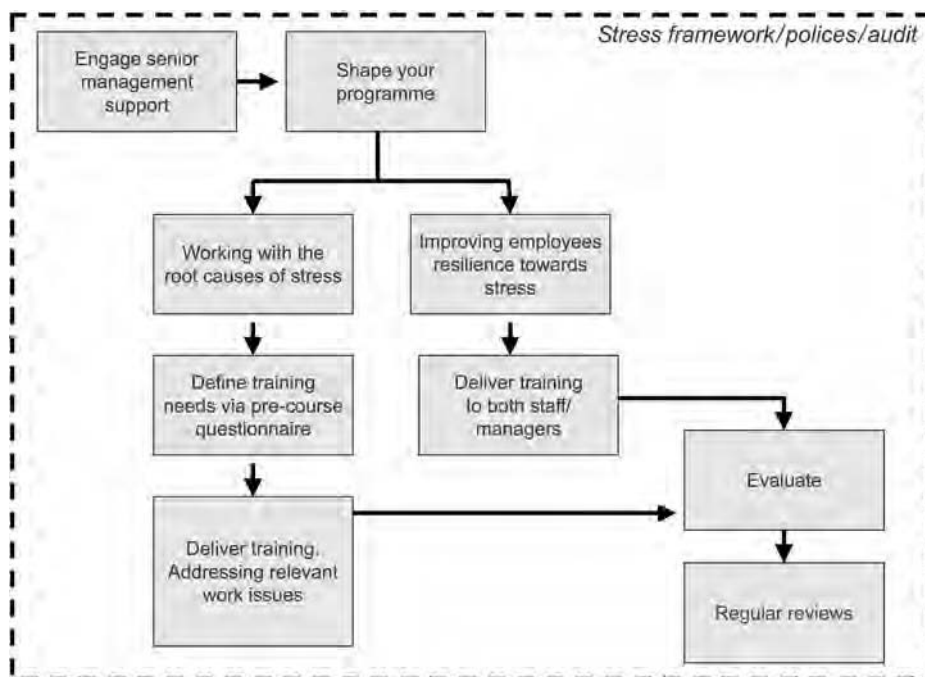
Be clear on what you want to achieve

Prior to training have a clear definition of what you want to achieve. A stress audit is an important tool that enables the employer to identify the pressure points in an organisation, pinpointing areas that may be experiencing stress and understanding the underlying causes. It provides key information that the organisation can use to improve the performance and wellbeing of its employees, and can form the basis of a subsequent training intervention. Employee opinion surveys are also a good source of information for ascertaining whether an organisation is experiencing inappropriate levels of stress.

Ensure there is senior management buy-in

For the training to have real value in the workplace, it is important that senior management is visibly supporting the initiative and actively involved in its design and development. As the programme is delivered it

Figure 1 Stress training flowchart



can be extremely effective to ask a senior manager to open each training course, and outline the background and aims of the programme. Moreover, senior management should attend the training themselves – not only to help with their own working lives but also to demonstrate that they practise what they preach.

Choose the right methodology

Top five tips

- (1) Ensure that the training takes place within a wellbeing/stress management framework.
- (2) Identify five bullet points outlining what you want the training to achieve (at what level do you want to work?).
- (3) Do not expect the training provider to solve all the problems – responsibility for improving the work environment must rest with the organisation.
- (4) Agree with the training provider how you will jointly evaluate the programme.
- (5) Maintain momentum in the initiative through regular review sessions with all (management and employees).

Choosing the most appropriate method of training is just as important as recognising the need for the training itself. Increasingly organisations are leaning towards e-learning, however, this does not encourage skills practice or enable the discussion and sharing of ideas – both of which are vitally important to achieve tangible improvements. With a sensitive topic, such as stress, the “hands-on” input of a skilled trainer or facilitator is essential to avoid the training becoming a “general moan” session.

Training within a managing pressure programme can be delivered at one of two levels.

Improving resilience to stress

First, training can be used to improve people’s resilience to stress and promote effective coping. This typically focuses on helping employees to identify the symptoms of stress and develop safe coping strategies for themselves and their teams. This approach acknowledges that a degree of stress is part of everyday life and some pressure is healthy. A key focus is on creating hardiness towards the

workplace stresses that cannot be controlled and identifying actions and support options for individuals to avoid becoming “stress victims”. The importance of personal responsibility is a common theme. This sort of training tends to involve a high proportion of expert input to help employees understand both the theory of stress and how it may be applied to individual health and wellbeing within the organisational context. The message is for everyone and therefore the training should be delivered to all (employees, managers and senior managers alike).

Empowering employees

The second level at which training can be delivered involves delving more deeply into the causes of stress, and empowering employees to identify and implement less stressful and more effective work practices. A good way to initiate this sort of programme is to ask employees to complete a pre-course questionnaire which encourages them to analyse times and situations when they experience stress, and to consider the causes. This encourages buy-in from the very beginning, as well as ensuring that the subsequent training is tailored and addresses relevant issues for those involved. For example, if the pre-course questionnaire has identified that stress is created when meeting end of month deadlines, an applied module on prioritisation or time management will be an ideal way to help resolve this particular issue. Similarly, if a manager is struggling to make maximum use of his or her team’s resources, a module on delegation and feedback will help eliminate the source of stress.

With training at this level, the emphasis is on making a difference through pinpointing the issues, developing realistic action plans and introducing regular review processes. The trainer works as a facilitator, providing objective insight, encouraging delegates to own their own solutions and coaching the group towards successful outcomes. This ensures that the learning is embedded and employees and the team are committed to improvement.

In-depth training for managers

Further in-depth training for managers is essential. The managerial role can be one of the

most stressful positions within an organisation. Managers often find themselves exposed to many competing pressures and demands. Alongside their own stresses, managers are responsible for identifying stress in staff and providing appropriate help and support. Managers who are trained in managing pressure are not only more effective role models but they are also better placed to recognise the common signs and symptoms of stress-related psychological disorders, make a confident assessment of staff distress and provide appropriate support. As well as training managers, some organisations are going a step further and equipping certain members of staff with the skills to support employees in particular areas. In the case of East London and The City Mental Health Trust (see below), a consultant was engaged to train a number of employees as harassment advisers to support colleagues who may be experiencing stress through bullying at work.

Case study. Tackling bullying and harassment at East London and The City Mental Health Trust

The Government is committed to the Improving Working Lives agenda, which aims to provide a positive working environment for employees, promoting a zero tolerance policy towards harassment and bullying. In line with this, the Trust identified harassment and bullying as a key priority to address, tackling it from a preventative and reactive stance. This includes effectively communicating a zero tolerance policy whilst ensuring that policies and procedures are in place and adhered to should a situation arise. The Trust has an employee assistance programme (run by Right Corecare) which plays a strategic role in dealing with harassment and bullying cases by offering support and counselling to the victim, and the bully.

To support this the Trust decided to introduce a further support mechanism for employees in the shape of a Harassment Support Adviser Scheme. The role of Harassment Support Adviser would be in addition to employees' existing responsibilities. Sonia Harding, Equalities Adviser, explains: "We felt that there was a role for employees within the Trust who could be trained to provide support, and would be in a position to meet face-to-face with those affected. This would provide an informal way to deal with the situation.

Currently employees who are affected by harassment can talk to Right Corecare EAP counsellors through the advice line and be referred to a qualified counsellor for a meeting if appropriate; or they can report the incident via

the formal procedures in place." David Cooper, HR Director at the Trust, adds: "Employees will perhaps approach a colleague they respect if they know they have been appropriately trained and developed, and have an understanding of harassment issues. It will be a complementary service running alongside the EAP."

Anna Shuttleworth, Head of Training at Right Corecare became involved in the initiative to train eight harassment advisers. Shuttleworth comments: "The course objectives were to develop a common understanding of harassment in the workplace, including the legal aspects; an appreciation of the effects of harassment and the subsequent needs of those affected; an understanding of the role and the difference between the Advisers and counsellors. The training was highly interactive and included role plays and practical exercises which helped the Advisers to hone their active listening and empathetic skills, as well as some counselling skills to help others talk to them. The role-plays also demonstrated potential difficult situations, and how to handle them. An important aspect of the training was for the Advisers to get to know one another better, so that they would be able to support each other through the process. The Advisers themselves will need coping strategies as the role can be emotionally challenging."

Feedback from the Advisers was extremely positive and all felt prepared to take on their new responsibilities. Harding summarises: "The Harassment Advisers will provide an additional support service to our employees, running alongside the EAP."

Training at all levels is essential to create an effective, healthy and versatile workforce. However, the reality is that often time is devoted to the former and work on the root causes does not happen. In the short term this may be acceptable. However, in the long term, if employees are not enabled to manage and solve their own stress issues then a "victim" mentality is likely to emerge (e.g. people develop a form of learned helplessness which stops them taking personal responsibility).

Maintain momentum in the programme

The challenge for any training programme is to ensure that the learning transfers back to the workplace. Managing stress should not be perceived as a one-off training event. It is a process. After all training events, managers

should schedule regular review sessions with team members to ensure they are implementing the training lessons and to help deal with any barriers that may be preventing change taking place. This could be facilitated by the training consultants that ran the original programme.

Measure effectiveness

It is essential that the organisation and the training provider work together to define an appropriate evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of the training and the impact on key organisation indicators. A workshop feedback form will evaluate the quality of the training itself (e.g. was the training provider effective) but other tools should also be used to track:

- implementation of action plans;
- changes to individual and team behaviour; and
- the subsequent impact on HR metrics such as sickness, performance and absenteeism.

The evaluation process is also very useful for feeding back to the organisation any barriers that may prevent employees from executing what they have learned on the programme. An organisation that has invested in training for its employees, but still sets impossible deadlines, has further changes to make! Organisations can have an expectation that the training provider will fix all the problems – training will deliver new skills that employees can use and can highlight new ways of working; however, the organisation itself has to take responsibility for changing a stressful culture.

Biographical Notes

Both authors can be contacted at the Department of Management, College of Business and Economics, California State University, Fullerton, Fullerton, CA 92834, USA.

New Developments in Managing Job Related Stress

by *Sandy Ornelas* and *Brian H. Kleiner*

Abstract

We spend over ten yours a day at work or on work related issues. We not only have to deal with work pressures but also juggle, personal relationships, personal finances, information technology, personal fears and changes. All these aspects of modern-day-living can be incredibly stressful, which imposes high physical demands on our bodies and emotional costs on our lives (Cohen, 2001).

Current statistics illustrate that stress is a bigger problem than we give it credit. In western society, work is the primary factor for stress. Although every industry and career has its own unique set of problems and sources of stress, and each job carries its specific requirements, stress can be reduced. The question is how do we reduce or eliminate stress in our work environment and how do we take care of ourselves in order to cope in stressful work situations.

We first begin by taking care of ourselves. There is a new wave of holistic stress therapies that can be incorporated in our personal lives to help us deal with work-related stress such as: Aromatherapy, Yoga, Acupuncture, Hypnosis and of course simple exercise and healthy eating. After we have a healthy us we can conquer our work environment through evaluating the factors that contribute to harmful stress in our work place, implementing stress management measures to reduce workplace stress and monitoring the progress of these changes.

Stress

In our modern day society at least eight hours of our day is spent directly on work. Not including the hour to get ready, another hour for the commute to and from work (if we are lucky). We not only deal with the work-related stress but we also juggle our personal relationships, personal finances, information technology (e-mail, mobile phones, and pagers), fears (crime, failure, and loneliness), and changes that can all be extremely stressful.

Stress in itself is not a bad thing. A certain amount is necessary to motivate you, and without some pressures, life would become boring and without purpose (Cohen, 2001). How you react to stress depends on whether you see yourself in control of a situation or overwhelmed by it (Cohen, 2001).

So what is stress? According to American Heritage Dictionary, stress is a state of extreme difficulty, pressure, or strain. For the purpose of this article stress is defined as the byproduct of modern life that derives from our ef-

fort of balancing the demands of work and family life. The technical name for these demands is “stressors” and the resulting wear and tear on the body is stress.

There are two types of stress:

1. Acute – (immediate), which can be a one-time incident that usually comes and goes quickly?
 - Examples: Narrowly avoiding a car crash or a violent confrontation with someone.
2. Chronic – (long-term), which can be caused by a continuing string of stressful incidences, or an ongoing situation.
 - Examples: Difficult job environment or a state of loneliness (Emotional Wellness, 2003).

When our body experiences stress there is a rush of adrenaline, heightened muscle tension, faster heart rate, and raised blood pressure. If our body experiences this stress on a daily basis, the body will soon suffer and the experience becomes distress (Cohen, 2001).

There are three stages of stress:

1. Alarm
2. Resistance
3. Exhaustion

In stage one, *alarm*, a person’s body triggers a complex cascade of biochemical events and the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol are pumped into the bloodstream (Cohen, 2001). In stage two, *resistance*, the body’s heightened physical responses create an increase in activity so that the person either leaves the situation, or stays and attempts to cope by resisting or adapting to the stressful event (Cohen, 2001). The last stage, *exhaustion*, the person has been reacting to the stressful event for so long that they are overwhelmed, their energy is finally depleted and the result is exhaustion (Cohen, 2001). In stage three, this is where the body becomes susceptible to health problems.

Symptoms of Stress

Symptoms are categorised in five ways:

1. *Emotional* – anxiety, nervousness, worries, depression, anger, irritability, guilt, moodiness, loss of enjoyment of life, loneliness, loss of humour, lack of confidence, isolation, and job dissatisfaction.
2. *Physical* – feeling restless, feeling uptight, jumpy, high blood pressure, back and neck muscle tension, lack of energy, dry mouth headaches, insomnia, dizziness, loss or increase in appetite and ringing in the ears.

**New Developments
in Managing Job
Related Stress**

3. *Behavioural* – impatience, impulsiveness, hyperactivity, short temper, aggressiveness, alcohol abuse, use of drugs, avoiding difficult situations, loss of sex drive, and overworking.
4. *Mental* – frequent lapses of memory, constant negative thinking, being very critical of yourself, inability to make decisions, difficulty getting things done, distorted ideas, very rigid attitudes and difficulty concentrating.
5. *Health* – high blood pressure, higher than usual susceptibility to colds and flu, migraines, irritable bowel symptoms, ulcers, stomach disorders, heart attacks, angina, strokes, asthma and skin rashes.(Cohen, 2001).

The most common symptoms are hair loss, insomnia, depression, irregular menstrual cycles, low libido, decrease or increase in appetite and high blood pressure.

Work Stress

In the western world today, work is the primary cause for stress. Our jobs are demanding and every changing. Every industry faces new competition requiring employees to work longer hours for the same amount of pay. As the population increases and economic times get harder, we experience a saturated work pool that diminishes our job security. This may explain why so many people remain in jobs that are consistent but not fulfilling. There is an increase in job stress and related costs.

According to the American Medical Association, 95 million Americans take medication for stress-related problems. Eighty percent of health care is spent on stress-related disorders. One hundred and fifty billion dollars a year is spent on stress-related disorders and 1.6 billion dollars alone is spent on anti-anxiety pills in the United States. American businesses lose an estimated \$200-300 billion dollars per year to stress-related productivity loss and other costs. It is up to us as managers and workers to address work-related stress and correct the work environment as well as to be proactive in personal stress-management.

Work Conditions That May Lead to Stress

Job Design – Heavy workload, infrequent rest breaks, long work hours, hectic and routine tasks that have little inherent meaning that does not utilise workers skills and provide little sense of control.

Management Style – Lack of participation by workers in decision-making process; poor communication in the organisation and lack of family friendly policies.

Interpersonal Relationships – Lack of support from co-workers and supervisors.

Work Roles – Conflicting or uncertain job expectations; excessive work responsibility.

Career Concerns – Job insecurity; no opportunity for growth, advancement, or promotion.

Environmental Conditions – Unpleasant or dangerous physical conditions such as crowding, noise, air pollution or ergonomic problems. (NIOSH, 2003).

It is important that we identify the factors that stimulate stress in our work environment in order to be able to implement strategies that can reduce or eliminate further stress.

Managing a Stress-free Work Environment

A practical three-step process for managing workplace stress is:

1. *Assess* the workplace for factors that contribute to harmful stress.
2. *Implement* stress management measures to reduce workplace stress.
3. *Monitor* the progress and implement adjustments as appropriate.

(Cal/OSHA, 1998)

The assessment of the workplace stress profile begins by reviewing the business records to identify:

- Recent increase number of stress-related workers' compensation claims.
- Employee complaints in which stress was listed as a contributory factor.
- Customer complaints describing the employee as irritable or stressed.
- Recorded incidents of verbal or physical conflict among any employees.
- Recent increase in absenteeism associated with the filing of stress claims.
- Unusually high employee turnover rates that could be related to work place stress.

If more than one of these appears in your review, it is a red flag that your work environment may be a victim of stress. The next step is to assess the situation in more detail by learning about the job characteristics, uncomfortable or unsafe aspects of the work environment, and the current organisational practices that may contribute to workplace stress.

After identifying the potential causes for work stress, it is important that management take proactive measures in preventing future job stress by:

New Developments in Managing Job Related Stress

- Ensuring that the workload corresponds to employees' job skills and resources.
- Designing jobs that will motivate, challenge and take full advantage of employees' skills and abilities.
- Defining workers' roles and responsibilities.
- Allowing workers to partake in participatory decision making process.
- Supporting network of friends and co-workers.
- Establishing work schedules that are compatible with the demands and responsibilities outside the job.

The successful implementation of a stress-free work environment depends on how management values its employees' well-being while they are at work, how flexible management is when addressing any workplace stress problem, and how management creates and maintains open lines of communication with its employees. By fostering open lines of communication with employees about stress issues, management can encourage employees to suggest solutions to the problems they experience on the job.

Work Stress Prevention Measures

The greatest stress prevention measure is believing that job stress can be reduced or eliminated. Then take the following actions:

- Train managers and supervisors to be effective communicators, coaches and facilitators
- Hold group discussions with employees to identify job conditions, stress factors, health conditions and appropriate satisfaction levels.
- Propose and prioritise job stress prevention strategies.
- Communicate planned interventions to employees.
- Include objective measures.
- Maintain open lines of communication with employees.
- Encourage anonymous feedback.
- Recognise and reward outstanding performance.
- Take care of your own stress that may compound with job stress.

Personal Stress Management

The increasing demands of work and life combined can be difficult to manage at times. It is up to us to take care of ourselves first to be instrumental in our work environment. Begin with healthy eating. Make sure that you are putting the meats, fruits and vegetables into your daily diet. Stay away from caffeine, sugar, and alcohol; these foods affect your mood and cause addi-

tional stress. Next, implement exercise in your daily routine. Exercising three times a week for 20 minutes will keep your mind and body fit. If eating right and exercising is not reducing stress, the following therapies and treatments can be incorporated into your life:

- Aromatherapy – means “treatment using scents.” It is a holistic treatment of caring for the body with pleasant smelling botanical oils that are added to your bath or massaged into your skin.
- Acupuncture – means “needle piercing.” The practice of inserting stainless steel needles beneath the surface of the skin. It is used to regulate or correct the energy flow to restore health.
- Yoga – consists of physical and mental exercises that help strengthen the body, maintain suppleness and reduce stress.
- Massage therapy – is a systematised manipulation of soft tissue for the purpose of normalising them. The basic goal of massage therapy is to help the body heal itself and to increase health and well-being.
- Music therapy – Listen to music that you feel comfortable listening. The rhythm of the music or beat has a calming effect on us, as music is a significant mood-changer and reliever of stress, working on many levels at once.
- Colour Therapy – use sensitivity to colour to identify and correct imbalances in the body’s internal energy pattern that might lead to emotional or physical ill health.

It is vital that we combat stress at every level. It needs to begin with our own personal well-being so we can battle the stresses of work. It is important to remember that it is impossible to address or reduce stress in every employee’s workplace or personal life. But being in a sound mind and body is a great start.

Conclusion

Life is full of conflicting choices, demands, desires and expectations. People react differently to stress. How you react depends on your strategies for coping with stress, your level of social support and how you view your social support. Respectful and considerate management of employees can help everyone get through the difficult times with manageable levels of stress. When stressful situations arise in the work environment, it is important that the company’s management and its employees jointly address the stressors in the work environment through employee participation in assessing the problem; communicating potential resolutions and recognising that stress management is a joint effort. Most importantly, relieve your own stress through exercise, muscle relaxation, colour, scent and massage. A stress-free work environment begins with a stress-free individual.

**New Developments
in Managing Job
Related Stress**

References

- California OSHA, *Managing stress arising from work*, Cal/OSHA Consultation Publication List, Sept. 1998. <http://www.dir.ca.gov>
- Carlson, Richard (1998) *Don't sweat the small stuff at work*. Hyperion, NY.
- Cohen, Michael (2002) *Identifying, understanding, and solutions to stress*. Caxton Publication Group, London.
- McIlwain, H. (July 3 1999) *Medical Update: Evaluate Your Stress Level*. Tampa Medical Group, PA. <http://www.tampamedicalgroup.com/July3.htm>
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). *Stress at work* (DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 99-101). Cincinnati, Ohio: Publications Dissemination, EID. <Http://www.helpdesk-online.com/oldsite/may18/Stress.htm>
- Phillips, D. (May 18, 2000) *Managing Stress in the Support Center*. Helpdesk-On Line, <http://www.helpdesk-online.com/oldsite/may18/Stress.htm>
- Stress management* (June 25, 2003) Retrieved June 28, 2003, from <http://content.health.msn.com/content/healthwise/38/9489.htm>
- Stress the silent killer*. Retrieved June 28, 2003 from <http://www.holisticonline.com/stress/stress-introduction.htm>

Stress Management

...an Emerald Guide





YOGA'S EFFECTIVENESS IN WORKPLACE STRESS MANAGEMENT

Sharma Uttamchand Harishankar¹ | Dr. Anshul Rajawat²

¹Research Scholar, Sabarmati University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.

²Associate Professor & Head, Department of Management, Sabarmati University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.

ABSTRACT

Globalization puts a lot of work strain on employees. This stress disrupts employees' personal and professional lives. This tension causes employee stress. This stress becomes persistent. Companies run stress management programmes, but they are ineffective. Yoga is a simple and effective approach to reduce workplace stress. Many studies have shown that it relieves workplace stress. Employees in the corporate sector often have severe workloads due to competition and other considerations. This produces stress in many employees, both positive and negative. Yoga relaxes the mind and relieves tension. In this research, we will investigate the effectiveness of Yoga among reducing workplace stress in corporate workers. A literature research of Indian and international writers was conducted to determine the impact of Yoga on workplace stress management. Yoga has been found to help employees minimise job stress. Yoga has been shown to be effective in reducing stress in the workplace. This study suggests that corporations should use yoga to manage stress and achieve their goals. Companies should enforce regular yoga sessions by competent yoga teachers/instructors to reduce employee stress.

KEY WORDS: Workplace, Employees, Stress, Yoga.

INTRODUCTION:

Life is full of trials. Everyday, humans face new obstacles, big and little. Others found it tough to struggle with them. The burdens of life vary from person to person. Stress is a burden that practically everyone carries. Positive and negative stress exist. Positive stress is when someone accepts a burden cheerfully and executes their job more efficiently without extra mental strain. Positive stress only functions in a positive way in order to complete task efficiently and not panic afterward. Negative stress is the opposite. It occurs before work, causing worry and ruining the task. Stress affects not just the intellect but also the physical. The Oxford Dictionary defines stress as a state requiring physical or mental energy. It affects people's natural physiological and psychological functions. Stress is a disruption of the body's equilibrium. This demand happens in the mind and body when coping with life's continual changes (Sharma, S. D., Chauhan, A., & Khanna, S. 2012). Employees must constantly work on electronics. Excessive use of technology, such as smartphones, causes stress (Malik, S., & Devi, N. 2018). Stress causes fatigue, headaches, stomach issues, muscle aches/pain, insomnia, and libido loss. It causes numerous other ailments and weakens the person both physically and emotionally. Stress causes obesity, diabetes, depression, asthma, and heart disease. Employees who are stressed out at work are more prone to develop heart disease and ulcers, high blood pressure and headaches, sleep disorders and fatigue. Employees who are stressed out at work are more prone to make poor decisions and accidents (Deshpande, R. C. 2012). Employees in the corporate sector have a lot of work to do in today's globalised world. This competitive era is taxing on them. This demanding nature caused them to work overtime practically every day, causing stress. This stress affects their productivity, effectiveness, sleep, and many other facets of their lives. Meditation and yoga have been shown to help in stress management. Many Yogic poses assist relieve tension. Yoga improves mental health. It is a terrific tool for healing (Sheetal, 2020). Yoga is important for your health, disease prevention, and recovery. In addition, it is effective in treating work-related stress, pulmonary tuberculosis, pleural effusions, OCD, chronic bronchitis, hypertension, irritable bowel syndrome, hyperacidity, colitis (indigestion), diabetes, gastro-esophageal reflux disease (GERD), hepatitis (gall stones) and celiac disease (Bhandari, C. B. et al. 2012). Yoga activities like Bandhas, Mudras, and Shat-Karmas (Yogic cleaning procedures) are also quite effective in treating this health issue. These and other yoga asanas can relieve stress. Pranayams like Bhramari, Nadi-Shodhana, Sitkari, Sheetal, and Ujjayi Pranayamas, as well as Yogic Cleansing Processes like Jala-Neti, Kapalbhathi, and Trataka are also helpful in reducing stress.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY:

The objective of this paper is to find out the effectiveness of different Yoga practices in reducing stress level in corporate sector employees. This research study will review various literatures in order to find out the role of Yoga in stress management at workplace.

MECHANISM OF YOGA:

Yoga is an ancient therapy that can help with a variety of health issues (Sheetal, 2020). Yoga totally renews and replenishes an individual's mind, body, and spirit. Yoga practise improves a person's mental and physical fitness, as well as their ability to think creatively. Yoga helps people become more disciplined and optimistic in their lives. As a result, negative thoughts eventually go away, and peo-

ple become mentally and physically fit. As a result, it's a fantastic personality builder. Yoga is also highly effective at reducing stress (Sharma, S. D., Chauhan, A., & Khanna, S. 2012). Yoga raises cortical activation and lowers limbic arousal, increasing perceptual awareness and lowering emotional reactivity. It has a beneficial effect on the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Yogic relaxation techniques aid in the management of stress (Dwivedi, M. K., & Singh, S. K. 2016). Yoga is a global instrument for self-discovery as well as an art of life management. Regular Yoga practise can provide health benefits and increase human intellect for any Yoga practitioner. Yoga encompasses not only mind-body but also spiritual disciplines. Anyone who follows the Raj Yoga practise can achieve absolute health and spiritual elevation. This route can be followed by anyone who wishes to obtain perfect health, happiness, harmony, and ultimate bliss (Bhandari, C. B. et al. 2012). Stress management, sound sleep, reduced cortisol levels, relief from a variety of medical conditions, allergy and asthma relief, lower blood pressure, smoking cessation assistance, lower heart rate assistance, spiritual growth, well-being, anxiety and muscle tension relief, increased strength and flexibility, and slowing the ageing process are all benefits of Yoga (Ramya, P., & Malliga, N. 2015). Yoga is a tried-and-true biopsychosocial way of life. It provides a healthy body, a quiet mind, and aids in the development of healthy relationships and societal harmony. Yoga emphasises the integration of the body, mind, and spirit. Yoga postures and kriyas can help you attain a healthy physique, while breathing exercises and meditation can help you reach mental clarity and emotional equilibrium. Yama and Niyama are also present for societal harmony (Doria, S., Irtelli, F., Sanlorenzo, R., & Durbano, F. 2015).

YOGA VERSUS OCCUPATIONAL STRESS:

Yoga is an all-in-one formula and excellent stress management therapy for working people. It revitalises a person's mind, body, and spirit. Asanas, Pranayama, and Dhyana are all aspects of yoga. It improves people's vitality and provides them a cheerful attitude. It's a holistic combination and excellent therapy for lowering working stress (Sharma, S. D., Chauhan, A., & Khanna, S. 2012). Work-related stress, respiratory difficulties, heart problems, digestive problems, and genitourinary problems can all be helped with regular Yoga practise. Humoral factors, nervous system activity, cell trafficking, and bio-electromagnetism are all consequences of Yoga activities such as meditation, Asanas, and Pranayama on human physiology. Yoga practise on a daily basis aids in the treatment of chronic illness and stress (Bhandari, C. B. et al. 2012). Yoga provides a variety of stress-reduction approaches. Breathing and stretching exercises, as well as meditation, are included. By practising breathing techniques and meditation, even disabled persons can benefit from Yoga. Yoga is a wonderful treatment and a combination of movements that can help with stress management (Balaji, D. P. V. 2012). Yoga and meditation are excellent stress relievers. Stress management programmes for all employees, especially women, should be implemented in every firm (Ramya, P., & Malliga, N. 2015). Yoga, meditation, and stress have a very favourable link. Yoga and meditation have been shown to help with stress management at work. Yoga and meditation can be used in the workplace to help employees cope with stress (Deshpande, R. C. 2012). According to a study conducted by Hartfiel, N. et al. in 2012, the experimental group of Yoga practitioners had significant stress reduction and improved psychological well-being. In compared to the control group, the Yoga group reported substantial felt tension, back

pain, melancholy and anger, as well as feeling self-assured at the end of the study. According to the findings of the study, yoga can help to minimise job stress. According to a study conducted by Campbell, D., and Moore, K. in 2004, the experimental group of Yoga demonstrated lower levels of stress at the end of the study after six weeks than at the beginning. Yoga is a promising stress-reduction technique. Yoga should be taught to help people control their stress (Sharma, M. 2013). Maddux, R. E., Daukantaite, D., and Tellhed, U. conducted a study in 2017 that found that after 16 weeks of Yoga intervention, the experimental group exhibited significant reductions in stress and all psychological health parameters. The experimental group of Yoga practitioners exhibited considerable reductions in stress and significant increases in well-being when compared to the control group. After 8 weeks of yoga practise, the control group began to exhibit significant reductions in stress. Yoga can help you manage your stress. It has the potential to improve people's emotional and physical wellbeing. Yoga benefits people on three levels: increased connection, mental/psychological flexibility, and conflict resolution (Hall, T. M. 2009).

CONCLUSION:

Yoga has been shown to be a very effective stress management tool (Tripathy, M. 2018). Yoga has been demonstrated to be an effective therapy for lowering stress in the workplace (Sharma, S. D., Chauhan, A., & Khanna, S. 2012). Pranayama is an excellent stress-reduction technique (Vedamurthachar, A., Damodaran, B., Lakshmanan, S., & Kochupillai, V. 2013). Workplace stress management can be greatly aided by yoga and meditation (Deshpande, R. C. 2012). Workplace yoga intervention minimises stress (Hartfiel, N. et al. 2012). All of the research papers in this domain suggest Yoga as a wonderful stress management tool in the workplace. Yoga is a simple, natural healer, convenient, and all-encompassing practise. Yoga is a developing therapy in stress management & well-being, as well as harmonising physiological, psychological, and psychosocial health to live life to the fullest in current times when individuals are left with no time from work. Employees in the corporate sector can easily practise Yoga during their lunch breaks, making Yoga an even more useful tool. Yoga has been shown to be a very efficient stress-reduction therapy, as well as a cure for many ailments induced by stress, and it is very adaptive for employees at work. In upcoming research investigations, yoga may be employed as an intervening therapy for a variety of health issues.

REFERENCES:

- I. Bhimani, N. T., Kulkarni, N. B., Kowale, A., & Salvi, S. (2011). Effect of pranayama on stress and cardiovascular autonomic tone and reactivity. *National Journal of Integrated Research in Medicine*, 2(1), 48-54.
- II. Balaji, D. P. V. (2012). Stress and Yoga. *Journal of Yoga & Physical Therapy*, 2(2), 1-4.
- III. Bhandari, R. B., Bālākṛṣṇa (Ācārya), Bhandari, C. B., Sharma, G. D., Singh, K., Pandya, P., & Katiyar, V. K. (2012). Implications of corporate yoga: A review. INTECH Open Access Publisher.
- IV. Campbell, D., & Moore, K. (2004). Yoga as a preventative and treatment for depression, anxiety, and stress. *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, 14(1), 53-58.
- V. Cutshall, S. M., Wentworth, L. J., Wahner-Roedler, D. L., Vincent, A., Schmidt, J. E., Loehrer, L. L., & Bauer, B. A. (2011). Evaluation of a biofeedback-assisted meditation program as a stress management tool for hospital nurses: a pilot study. *Explore*, 7(2), 110-112.
- VI. Sharma, S. D., Chauhan, A., & Khanna, S. (2012). Stress management through 'yoga practices' in the corporate sector. *African Journal of Business Management*, 6(37), 10117-10124.
- VII. Sheetal. (2020). An empirical study on effect of yogic regime on hypothyroidism with special reference to Delhi. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, 4(7), 164-171.
- VIII. Sheetal. (2020). An experimental study on obesity and weight management with special reference to yoga practices. *International Journal of Physical Education, Sports and Health*, 7(2), 269-272.
- IX. Tripathy, M. (2018). The Effect of Anuloma Viloma Pranayama and Kapalbhathi on resting pulse rate and stress of school going children in Bhubaneswar. *Group*, 71(312), 71-029.