A Study of TV Personnel's Sources of Occupational Stress and Interest in Worksite Stress Management Techniques

Kathleen A. Vampola
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Michael L. Hilt
The University of Nebraska at Omaha, mhilt@unomaha.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/commfacpub

Part of the Communication Commons

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/commfacpub/54
Feedback serves to facilitate communication among educators and broadcast professionals, enhancing mutual appreciation of goals and demands associated with the education and employment of students in telecommunications fields.

Editor: James Fletcher, University of Georgia
Editorial Assistant: Elizabeth Elkins, University of Georgia

Feedback is published quarterly by the Broadcast Education Association, 1771 N Street N.W., Washington, D.C., 20036. All business correspondence, membership questions, and changes of address should be sent to the BEA Executive Director at this address. Feedback is distributed to individual and institutional members of BEA. In addition, it is available to others from the address above at an annual subscription of $20.

Feedback welcomes the submission of articles from all authors. The publication especially encourages articles on teaching and curriculum relevant to the electronic media. These may include articles reporting trends in the electronic media industries when the content of the articles may be useful to students and faculty of established courses concerned with these industries. Feedback is also an outlet for research papers representing exemplary scholarship when the brevity or timeliness of the article may make it inappropriate for publication in journals.

Contributors should follow these guidelines in submission of material to Feedback:

1. Two paper copies of the manuscript should be submitted. Authors should retain a copy, because submissions will not be returned. In addition, authors may submit their work on:
   (1) Macintosh compatible diskette using WordPerfect, Microsoft Word or MacWrite word processing.
   (2) DOS compatible diskette using WordPerfect, Microsoft Word or Wordstar word processing.

2. Whether submitted on paper only or on paper and diskette, manuscripts should be double-spaced on 8 1/2 by 11 inch pages formatted in accordance with the current edition of Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). Citations and references included with the article must adhere to APA style guidelines.

3. Authors should indicate on the title page of the manuscript — on the title page only — their name(s), employer or professional affiliation, address, telephone number, FAX address and other electronic addresses.

4. Prior to submission, authors should carefully edit and proofread their work to ensure that manuscript appearance and use of language conform to high standards.

5. Feedback articles are typically limited to 2500 words or less. Article submissions should be sent to:

---

This issue of Feedback was produced with support from the Henry W. Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Georgia.
broadcast performance from a specific transmitter; not the "broadcast" of music online that is capable of being received and stored in a digital format anywhere anywhere in the world. The rapid growth of the Internet and online services in the past two years has put pressure on Congress to bring the Copyright Act, last revised in 1976, up to date with modern technology. A government task force is working on proposed revisions, but enactment may be a year or more away. Some answers may come sooner than that. ASCAP's blanket license agreement with the radio industry expired on December 31, 1995. BMI's agreement expires a year later. No one is saying anything right now, but it's a safe bet that the new agreements will make some provision for online performance. That may not be the end of it. Copyright owners concerned that online Cyberspace performances could result in users being able to download perfect digital copies to their computers, will want to be heard and will surely demand a piece of the royalty pie. Indeed, the day may not be too far off when recorded music is widely sold online.

The forerunner of such a service is already available. BMI has granted Adam Curry, the former MTV video disk jockey, certain rights to its entire repertoire of more than three million recordings. There are two types of service. One, called "Browse, Listen and Buy," allows users to sample 30-second cuts of new music. If they like what they hear, then they can purchase and download a CD-quality sound file. The second service, called "Real Time Audio," allows users to listen to audio programs. BMI says the software thwarts attempts at downloading. Interestingly, BMI has priced its online rights higher than for broadcast.

ASCAP says it is willing to negotiate online rights with anyone who wants to buy, but so far has only licensed the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington and one other similar organization. Both ASCAP and BMI base their license fees on a percentage of the gross revenues of the licensee. This may pose a problem for broadcasters who want to include music on World Wide Web sites, but only use the music as a marketing tool to promote the station. There will be no way of knowing what percentage of the station gross revenues can be attributed to the Web site. Even if the station were to sell advertising on its Web site, the revenues might be so small at the outset as to make it unprofitable for the copyright owners.

Putting music online is easy. But in doing so, a producer/developer may infringe on a copyright owner's rights. The answer is to proceed very carefully with the advice of competent copyright counsel, understanding that you have no rights until you have licensed the rights from their owner and that even then you have only the rights you have purchased subject to whatever limitations that licensor may place on the grant of rights.

The uncertainty and confusion surrounding the use of music online is but another example of how rapidly emerging technology has moved ahead of the law. But the genius of our system of law is its ability to adapt and react to changing times.

References
Flinn, J. (March 1, 1995). The line on online services. San Francisco Examiner.

Occupational Stress and Interest in Managing Stress -- TV

A Study of TV Personnel's Sources of Occupational Stress and Interest in Worksite Stress Management Techniques

Kathleen A. Vamppola
Michael L. Hilt
University of Nebraska, Omaha

The television industry's criticism of college faculty in the past has centered on the training and education of students for a career in the broadcast field (Roper, 1987). Professionals assert that more training is needed within a broadcast curriculum. Faculty maintain that the industry does not understand what a college education should accomplish. Beyond the questions concerning the skill levels of graduates, however, are issues that surface with any job in any profession. One area rarely discussed in either the classroom or the newsroom is occupational stress.

The television industry's immediate, quick and to-the-point nature brings news and entertainment to millions of American households. What is not evident on TV screens is the underlying stress associated with the behind-the-scenes preparations. Literature reveals a wide range of broadcast-industry stresses, such as rigid deadlines and difficult assignments (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991), ratings and increased workloads (Fensch, 1993), budget cuts and increased reporting due to satellite access (Small, 1993), demand for advertising profits (Jones, 1993), and physical appearance (Lipschultz & Hilt, 1994; Zoglin, 1993).

The purpose of this study was to investigate television personnel's perceptions of their occupational stress and their preferences for worksite stress management techniques. Of particular interest was whether quick, readily accessible, and easy stress management techniques believed to accommodate the medium's time-consuming and fast-paced nature were perceived as viable and valuable to television station personnel.

Past studies have investigated numerous occupations, such as a manufacturing company (Rizzo, House & Litzman, 1970), British graduate engineers (Newton & Keenan 1987), secretaries (Fenlason & Beehr, 1994), and nurses (Beehr, King, & King, 1990). Additionally, Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison and Pinneau (1975) studied 2,010 men representing 23 occupations ranging from forklift drivers to physicians, and including the high-stress jobs of air traffic controllers and train dispatchers. However, their
research did not include any mass media occupations. Existing studies indicate a lack of research regarding the broadcast industry and stress management.

Stress and work

Stress can elicit psychological and physiological responses that often negatively affect health and productivity (Chrousos & Gold, 1992; Simendinger & Moore, 1985). Carroll, Niven, and Sheffield (1993) indicated an association between high work demands and increased disease for both men and women.

However, stress management techniques can reverse the negative effects of stress, and have gained popularity. For example, Houston, Cates, and Kelly (1992) maintained that occupational social support eases job stress and psycho-social strain. Hibbard and Pope (1992) stated that individuals with such support tend to live longer than people who lack social support. Researchers have found evidence that a 20-minute massage decreased workers' fatigue and anxiety levels, and enhanced relaxation, mental alertness and cognitive skills (Field, Fox, Pickens, Ironson & Scafidi, 1993). Practicing breathing techniques on a regular basis improves employees' ability to cope with workplace stress (Toivanen, Lansimies, Jokela, & Hanninen, 1993).

Broadcast Industry stresses

Broadcast stresses cover a broad range including "stresses produced by deadlines, uncooperative news sources, difficult reporting assignments, etc." (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1991, p. 20). Other television stresses include time constraints (condensed stories), travel demands, ratings, cable and satellite service competition, increased workloads (due to staff and expenses downsizing -- a result of budget cuts), and "substantially more reliance on local affiliates to cover the (network-level) news" (Fensch, 1993, p. 2).

Corporate ownership and new technology brought change and "enormous pressures" (Jones, 1993). In addition, local stations are experiencing budget cuts, and increased reporting responsibilities due to satellite access (Small, 1993). News programs are influenced by the station owners' objective to earn advertising profits -- which in turn are dependent on good ratings that attract sponsors (Jones, 1993; Whitworth, 1993). Added pressure is placed on news personalities who are judged by their looks, vocal tones, and "on-camera charm" (Zoglin, 1993).

In addition to appearance concerns, Weaver and Wilhoit (1991) asserted that stresses such as deadlines and difficult reporting assignments prompt many men and women in their forties to end their broadcasting careers. Out of ten career categories, (with 10 being the lowest ranking) television ranked in the lower half of each dimension of job satisfaction -- 10 in autonomy; 8 in creativity; 7 in power; 6 in both income and prestige (DeFleur, 1992). Additionally, Burks and Stone (1993) state sources of stress for both female and male news directors include maintaining a staff, managing conflicts, and working long hours.

Gender Issues

Beyond general stress issues, literature reveals television industry females, especially on-the-air women broadcasters, experience additional occupational stress. For example, physical appearance has been cited as a major perceived barrier for women in broadcasting (Lipschultz & Hilt, 1994). Clark (1993) explained how a female television news anchor's 1983 landmark discrimination suit (which alleged she was fired because of her aging appearance) resulted in some changes for television news women. However, women around 40 years old -- who have seen aging women switched from on-the-air to other positions as their hair grays and wrinkles appear -- wonder how the networks will respond to 50-year-old women broadcasters (Clark, 1993).

Regarding women's family responsibilities and stress, Parry (1986) claimed employed mothers of dependent children face a relatively high risk for mental health problems, and child care coupled with employment may produce stressful overload in some cases. Burks and Stone (1993) declared that "female news directors were less likely than their male counterparts to find refuge from stress at home. Men were twice as likely as women to say they had no major source of stress at home, but women came home to a second job" (p. 546). Additionally, women usually respond to an ill child during work hours and men generally rely on a wife to assume child care (Burks & Stone, 1993). Weaver and Wilhoit (1991) agreed that it is difficult for women to balance both family and a career in journalism, and believed such challenges are reflected in other occupations as well. Furthermore, they declared women in journalism are less likely than men in that field to be married or have children.

The present study sought to identify major occupational stresses at local network-affiliated commercial television stations whether these sources of stress varied by occupation or gender, and the television personnel's interest in worksite stress management techniques.

Methodology

A self-administered questionnaire (Babie, 1995) was designed to gain information regarding stress that exists in the television industry. In June 1995, the questionnaires were distributed internally to a total of 197 management-level and other personnel at two midwest television stations. All departments were included to compare various occupational groups within the television environment. Participants had seven days to anonymously complete and return the survey by mail. Eight days after the initial distribution, a memo was distributed to all subjects, thanking those who had already responded and reminding others to return their forms. The last responses were received by mid-June 1995.

The survey instrument was organized into three specific categories. The first section contained fifteen 5-point Likert-scale items intended to gather information relevant to sources of occupational stress. Responses ranged from 1 for strongly agree to 5 for strongly disagree (5 indicated the highest level of perceived conflict). The second section had three parts pertaining to stress management techniques. 1) Respondents rank ordered their top three sources of occupational stress. 2) Fifteen Likert-type scale items assessed television personnel's interest in stress management techniques -- chosen on a basis of minimal practice time requirements and maximum benefits. Respondents indicated one of five levels of interest (ranging from very interested (1) to not at all interested...
Respondents described two or more barriers that might prevent them from practicing worksite stress management techniques.

Finally, respondents were asked twelve demographic questions pertaining to job description, management responsibilities, the number of years employed in various mediums, and if they were employed full-time or part-time. Additionally, subjects were asked their gender, year of birth, number of children, degree/major field of study, level of education, ethnicity, marital status, and current annual salary.

**Results**

Of the 197 questionnaires distributed, 58 surveys (29 percent) were returned by 23 males and 33 females. Fifty-two of the 58 respondents were Caucasian.

Television personnel ranked deadlines as their main source of occupational stress, followed by management conflict, work overload, job security and coworkers.

A crosstab analysis reveals the number of subjects from each department who indicated each stress as their top-ranked occupational stress. It shows 36.2 percent of the responses came from 17 news department personnel, of which nine indicated deadlines as their major source of stress.

An analysis of means was conducted to detect differences according to occupation. In addition, an ANOVA was performed to note significant differences between departments in general and departments by gender.

Only two questions showed significant difference between pairs of groups -- lack of personnel and groups working differently -- and in this case between females from different departments.

Lack-of-personnel stress by department indicated that the news department reported the highest levels of stress (3.72 mean), followed by the program/production department (3.14 mean), with 5 indicating the most stress and 1 the least. The sales department reported the least personnel stress (2.30 mean).

Breakdown by gender indicated news department females experienced the most stress related to lack-of-personnel (4.14 mean). These stresses were less problematic for females in program/production (1.50 mean), sales (2.14 mean), and office staff (2.73 mean). In contrast, office staff males reported the most stress regarding lack-of-personnel (4.00 mean).

The only other question that showed significant differences between pairs of groups was one concerning working with two or more groups who work differently, and then only for females. Breakdown by gender indicated that engineering department females experienced the highest stress related to working with different groups (5.00 mean), followed by office staff females (4.36 mean). Sales department females reported the lowest stress (2.86 mean).

Respondents indicated their interest in worksite stress management techniques. The “very interested” and “some interest” responses were combined to show which techniques subjects were most interested in. Likewise, “not much interest” and “no interest” responses were combined to show subjects’ least interest. The data reveal subjects were most interested in managerial support, the quieting reflex technique, and stretching -- all three scored equally, followed by walking, and stress-break area. Conversely, subjects showed the least interest in counseling, followed by hypnosis, visualization, and a tie between meditation and progressive relaxation.

**Table 1. Sources of Occupational Stress**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Ranked First</th>
<th>Ranked Second</th>
<th>Ranked Third</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadlines1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflict2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work overload</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Includes such responses as deadlines, lack of time, time constraints, time allotted.
2. Includes such responses as distrust, lack of written rules, schedule changes, management attitude, lack of leadership, no clear expectations.

**Table 2. First-ranked Stresses by Department**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Engineering</th>
<th>News</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Production</th>
<th>Sales</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadlines</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work overload</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coworkers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

This study's responses provided some insight concerning media organization pressures within the context of worksite stress management. First, deadlines, management conflict, and work overload are the major sources of stress associated with television industry occupations. Other main stresses listed included job security, and coworkers. Some open-ended responses concerning personnel's rank-ordered sources of occupational stress included the following: "People do not like each other here!!!," a need to compete for exclusive stories, and "Pay not comparable to other markets even other stations in this market."

Additionally, a subject wrote, "Management contract distrust" as this respondent's first-ranked stress, and added, "They (management) are trying to break the union. This really angers me."

It appears there are significant differences between the news and sales departments regarding perceptions of having enough personnel to complete assignments. There were additional differences when comparing just females' perceptions. The lack-of-personnel responses of females in the news department differed significantly from the females in three other departments -- program/production, sales, and office staff. Additionally, sales department females differed significantly from females in both the office staff and engineering departments regarding perceptions of working with two or more groups who work quite differently.

Some of those differences could be due to personality differences and/or career choice differences that might have lead certain individuals to their particular position within the television industry. To explain, all departments must handle their own type of deadlines. For example, while sales department personnel must reach quota by certain deadlines, news department workers have several types of more constant, intense deadlines. News personnel's deadlines include being at a certain place at a certain time to cover a story, writing to the length-of-the-story, and being ready to go on the air live. Utterback (1993, p. 28) described newsroom personnel's stress as "... the unrelenting stress of working in broadcast news with hourly deadlines and split-second timing... They have trouble making a transition from the hectic schedule of deadlines and interviews to the focused, one-to-one demands of a live broadcast."

This study's findings support the basic theoretical notion that media organizations are time-pressured industries with internal conflicts. Utterback (1993) for example, one respondent expressed "A lack of control or pride over the finished product" as a second-ranked stress, and "Job insecurity due to pressures from within the organization" for a third stress. The same subject wrote, "Management would not allow any of the above (techniques) while on company time, even if I had the free time to do it," and concluded with, "This page of information (demographics) too easy to pin down to an individual by management. Call it paranoia [sic]. YES, we have a lot of that here," and gave only department, management responsibility, and salary information. Similarly, another subject listed first and second-ranked stresses as "assignments with little value" and "dumb story ideas."

Open-ended responses such as these confirm that pressures from internal conflict and a lack of autonomy exist within local television organizations. Interestingly, only one respondent listed ratings as a stress. Also concurrent with McQuil (1991), this study's subjects identified time pressures as their number one source of occupational stress.

Although interesting results were obtained, the study has limitations. Because of the industry's time-pressures, it was difficult to reach general managers to explain the survey, obtain permission for distribution, and arrange continued communication with liaisons. Industry time pressures lead to another limitation -- the small response rate. Interestingly, although stations employ several part-time workers, all the respondents indicated that they were full-time personnel. Consequently, we do not know part-time personnel's perceptions regarding this research.

Additionally, although the open-ended response sections for stresses and barriers prevented the possibility of boxing in the respondents with specified options and assured responses specifically applicable to the television industry, the end result was too broad an array of responses. Fear of recognition was a problem since some subjects withheld certain demographic information they evidently thought would identify them (i.e. job description). Future research could benefit from a larger sample and from limiting stress and barrier choices. For example, future studies might limit stress options to the five main categories created by this study (deadlines, managerial conflict, work overload, job security, and coworkers), plus space to write other sources of occupational stress. Further examination into specific characteristics regarding the significantly different perceptions of the pairs of groups could result in rich, important television-worksite data. For example, isolate news and sales...
departments to delve deeper into the sources of lack-of-personnel stress.

Although a need for more research is indicated, this study revealed valuable data pertinent for television managers and college faculty. The television industry needs to make a conscious effort to listen to its employees. Educators need to acknowledge that occupational stress is an inherent part of broadcasting, and alert their students to that fact.

References


