

Stress Management

INTRODUCTION TO STRESS

People experience stress in private life and at work place. People have to work effectively against time and within the parameter of various rules and regulations. It is not always possible to create an organizational climate conducive to work. Various departments, groups and external environment factors affect individual behaviour. Minimal level of stress is required for organizations to operate effectively. Excessive stress is harmful for the individual as it causes mental and physical disequilibrium and subsequently leads to physical and mental disturbance. People suffer from high blood pressure, heart attack when stress is beyond control of the human beings. It is therefore necessary to identify causes of stress and modify behaviour so that the individual energy is directed towards organizational productivity and healthy organization climate is created.

Hans Selye¹, a medical researcher first used term “Stress” to describe the body’s biological response mechanism. He defined stress as “the nonspecific response of the body to any demand”. He views that stress is the spice of life, the absence of stress is death. Stress is usually considered to be negative and caused due to something bad. Thus stress refers to distress. Ivancevich and Matterson define stress as “the interaction of the individual with the environment” According to Beehr and Newman², stress is a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterised by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning. Stress is a dynamic condition in which a person is faced with lot of constraints while functioning in the organization. Stress causes discomfort, which leads to disequilibrium in the individual’s mind set. Stress is not always negative in nature. In a broader sense it is discomfort whether it creates problems.

Stress is also a source of inspiration. When there is a stress for any work it leads to higher performance. When stress is gravest, it reduces employee productivity. But there are example where people may get immune to stress having no negative effect on their performance. Such people do not get tense. This type of immunity is achieved through constant experience and training. John M. Ivancevich and Michael T. Matterson have defined stress as **“adoptive response, mediated by individual characteristics and/or psychological processes, that is a consequence of any external action, situation or event that places special physical and/or psychological demands upon a person”**. As it is clear from the definition that stress is caused due to external factors, situations or events. These have adverse impact on the individual characteristics and

psychological processes. These together put an additional burden or demands on individual, hence the stress. External factors may include social setting, work ethics in the organization, leadership styles, availability of resources, workload, level of technology and the work environment. The internal factors that are effected are psychological in nature and includes emotions, ego state, attitude, perception, motivational factors, need and demographics. If employees feel that external factors are of not much consequence and have no compelling effect the stress is not formed within the minds of individuals. High desire, uncertainty, result of promotion examination, unrealized ambition may cause stress to the individual.

Stress should not be confused with anxiety or nervous tension and damaging. They occur as regular features in many cases and have no long – lasting impact on the working capacities of the employees. Mishra (2003)³ has very aptly explained that anxiety may remain purely psychological and may not cause any physical impact. Similarly, only physical impacts will not be stress unless it is felt by the mind and heart. The psychological and physical impacts are visible in the form of stress. Anxiety is the cause of stress but not stress itself. Symptoms of stress are given in Figure 12.1 below:

Symptoms of Stress

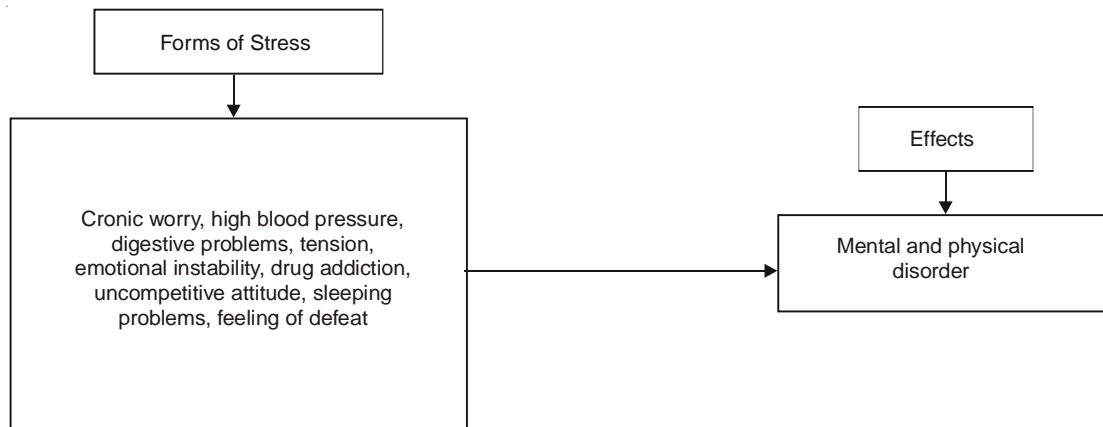


Fig. 12.1. Symptoms of stress

Stress is generally of a mild nature and one recovers from it easily. Once a person gets used to environmental factors and people with whom one generally works on a daily basis, there is no existence of stress. It is the work environment, plant, people and situations, which one is not used to, creates tension and resultant stress. The stress diminishes gradually when one get used to it. However the stress can be mild, stiff and chronic in nature. Mild stress is visible when person develops lack of appetite and high blood pressure. The stress becomes stiffer if these are not carefully countered. When stress attains a chronic stage, where a person develops instability, frustration and feel uncomfortable and can not cope up with problems. It affects physical efficiency and subsequently a psychological strength. This stage is called “**Burn out**”. In this stage individual is emotionally weakened. The stage of burn-out is reached when an individual fails to achieve his objective. He exhibits irritation, errors, frustration and apathy. Executives are highly prone to burn out

due to high pressure in the work environment. In such situation they resort to change the job that further adds to existing chronic burn-out situation as they are not able cope up with the changed environment. In such situation employees should resort to neuro – psycho treatment. In case of aggravation of this situation a state of “**Trauma**” is reached. Trauma is a very serious form of stress. It occurs in the organization where employees find it difficult to adjust. This may be caused due to pressure of work, late working hours, inability of employees to fulfill social obligation and poor time management. The work place trauma is carried home by employees where they develop various psychological disorder. Non adjustment in work place for a long time leads to suspension and firing of employee. Stress can be avoided by adopting an approach of co-operation, help the fellow employee in distress and social interaction with affected individuals.

General Adaptation Syndrome

The general adaptation syndrome (GAS) refers to development of individuals responses to stressful events in the form of physiological, psychological and behaviour patterns. They follow a fairly consistent pattern. These are of three types as classified by Hans Selve.

- (a) **Alarm Stage:** This is a warning stage and occurs as first sign of stress. Many physiological and chemical reactions occur. During this stage muscle becomes tense, pupils dilate and there is a increased hormone flow. Increased pituitary adrenaline secretion, increased respiration, heart trouble and high blood pressure are major symptoms of alarm stage. Regular physically exercises and expert psychiatric treatment can prevent this phenomenon.
- (b) **Resistance Stage:** If the alarm stage is not controlled in time, body organs develop resistance but leaves its ill effects. During the resistance stage individual is unable to rest and develops irritating nature. There is increased nervousness, tension frustration and uneasiness in the day to day work environment. Individual develops ulcer, loss of appetite and illness. Though an individual feels that he has over come the stress situation but its ill effects persist for a long time. It is therefore necessary to identify roots of stress and remove them for a permanent solution.
- (c) **Exhaustion:** When the body, psyche is affected it is believed the stress has reached the stage of exhaustion. During this stage individual experiences physical and mental pressures individual develops ulcers and high blood pressure. Exhaustion develops moodiness, negative attitude, individual appears fatigued and displays helplessness in his behaviour. Organizations where employees suffer from exhaustion must take corrective action. Poor health of employees, negative emotions and depression reduces the organizational effectiveness to a large extent. Large number of organizations have started physical and psychological treatment of employees on a regular basis.

SOURCES OF JOB STRESS

Organization, Group and individual have impact on the performance of a job. Environment also effects adversely on the efficiency of the individual. It is expressed in Figure 12.2 below:

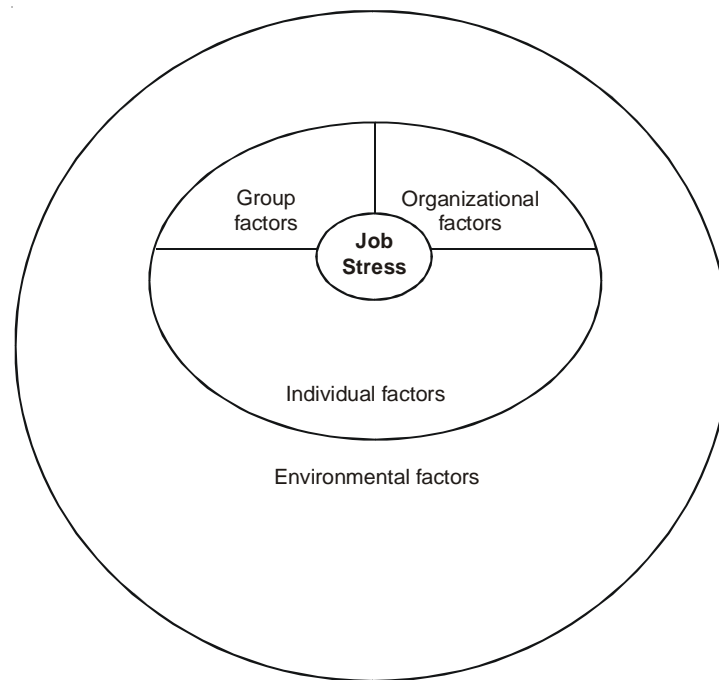


Fig. 12.2. Sources of job stress

1. Environment Factors

There are innumerable environmental factors that have caused a great deal of work stress on the employees. Ivancevich and Matterson have identified societal, economic, financial, cultural, familial and technological factors which have tremendous influence on mental health of the employees. Societal factors have forced both husband and wife to do the job to maintain a high level of life style. Government NGOs and other voluntary organizations have introduced various schemes for the welfare of the people. Though the life span in general has increased but the immunity in the body has decreased to a great level and large number of people are suffering from various disease caused by work stress. People have become more ambitious. They want their children to do well in life this causes stress. Environmental stressors like family demands and obligation, economic and financial conditions, race, caste, creed, ethnic identity, relocation due to transfer cause adverse effect on individuals. Recent communal violence around the world have changed political scenario, defence affiliations of nations have siphoned off the large resources toward defence preparedness. People are living in a fearful environment. These problems have to be solved by educating people and diverting their energies to the basic objective of the organisation. Science and technology should be used for the development and progress of human race and not for destruction purpose. All family problems should be resolved by assisting each other and that the people should learn to live in an atmosphere of peace co-existence should be the keyword.

2. Organizational Stressors

Organizational stressors can be classified into mission statement, strategies, policies,

organizational structure and design, reporting channels, communication, various processes, systems and last but not the least the working conditions. Organization mission and subsequent departmental goals have a long lasting impact on the employees. Over ambitious goals leave employees more stretched for attaining the same. Good organizational policies, procedures, rules, regulations keep employees in high spirit. On the contrary, adhocism, inadequate compensation, rigid rules, ambiguous organizational policies and faulty job design cause tremendous amount of stress.

Job related policies must be sound and updated. Task design should include job autonomy, task variety so that employee derive pleasure while at work. Work place, and work environment are two very important factors. Poor hygiene in work place, inadequate space, light, lack of physical security at work place are stressors. Stress is caused by inadequate support from subordinates, conflicting job requirements, inadequate and poor performance measurement, and lack of empowerment. Managerial style, role of superior boss, command and control mechanism leave much to be desired from Indian organizations. Policies should be sound and employee participation must be ensured at each level. It must be understood that wisdom and innovativeness is widely spread in the workers, it is the ability of managers to identify and canalize for organizational betterment.

3. Group Stressors

Hawthorne studies have established the impact of group cohesiveness, group norms and importance of group objective for attainment of organizational goals. Lack of cohesiveness creates conflict. Employees must be given full opportunities to develop themselves. People join group for social security that should be provided. Managers must ensure that job well done is recognized, omission on this account creates stress like situation in the minds of the employees. Group social events and group activities must be organized on a regular bases. Managers should form the part of group, which should not be based on rank and position. Employee morale must be kept high to avoid group stress.

4. Individual Stressors

Personal life and events of official life cannot be separated. Events of marriage, divorce, death in the family has a remarkable impact on work situation. Personal life difficulties are highly stressful.

(a) Job Security

Job and career enhancement can become a source of stress. Job security is one of the major reasons for an employee. Insecurity increases during times of recession. The prospect of losing job, specially when an employee is the sole bread earner for the entire family is very stressful. Another reason for job related stress is promotion or enhancement of appointment. A person must have a job commensurate with his qualification. Promotion must be related to efficiency and due care should be exercised in this regard. Nothing is more stressful that a junior employee being appointed as a senior to an equally competent person.

(b) Relocation

Relocation is related to transfer of a person to a different place. Transfers upsets the daily routine of individuals. The fear of working at new location with different people itself is stressful. Unpredictability about new work environment and creating new relationship

cause anxiety. Transfer also creates problems for family members. It may be admission in schools, adjustment to social environment, house and may even be language. In case a person has to search a new job at a different location, the stress is even greater.

(c) Changes in life structure

Span of life has many facets. Some of these are socio-economic environment, culture, systems, religion, race, education and person's interaction with society in different roles. If all these aspects are favorable, then the stress is minimal, stress is also determined by ability of a person to cope up with it and the faith. If a person's life is stable and move with a slow pace, there are less stress and more ability to cope with stress. While a person who has great ambition and moves with fast pace is not able to cope up with stress.

(d) Stress and Behaviour

Stress is a state of mind which reflects biochemical reactions in the human body. Environmental and internal forces cause sense of anxiety, tension and depression to human being. As stress is the non specific response of the body to any demand, it is necessary to understand specific or routine activities that cause stress. There are two types of activities. Desirable activities and undesirable activities. Both these activities create stress. The stress created by desirable and successful effects is called "eustress". Eustress is a positive, healthy and developmental stress response. It leads to better performance and a more adjusted personality. In eustress situation, we learn how to deal with the situation better. It improves our capacity to deal with stressful situations. Stress created by undesirable outcomes is known "distress". It is primarily the distress form of stress which causes undesirable effects on physical and psychological well – being of the person. Highly stressful activities weakens individuals ability to cope up with various situations. Just as extremely high level of stress is harmful and damaging, extremely low level of stress is also equally harmful. It causes boredom, reduces innovativeness and ability to face challenges. Thus moderate level of stress is desirable for higher level of performance. See the diagram 12.3 below indicating the relationship between stress and performance proposed by Henry L Tossi, et al.⁴

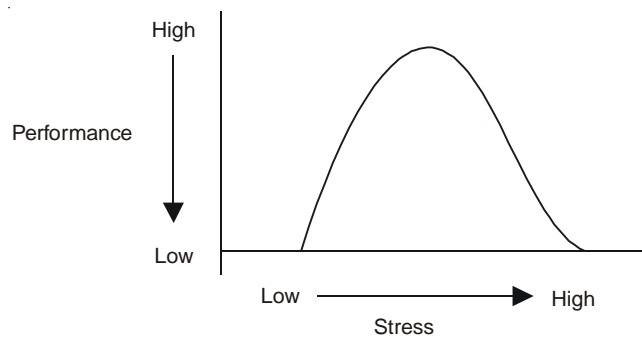


Fig. 12.3. Relationship of Stress and Performance

Physiological Response

When stress appears, immediate biochemical changes take place. Heart beat and heightening of all the body senses. Serious health problems occur as body faces stress for

long period of time. Baron⁵ concluded that stress could lead to breakdown of body's immune systems and may result in serious health problems such as high blood pressure, ulcer and even heart attack. High level stress can result in physical changes that threaten our health and well-being.

Psychological Response

People have different levels of handling stress. Those who are highly affected by stress tend to be depressed and display lack of self confidence. They believe that they have lost the battle in handling a situation and develop a feeling of helplessness and elicit sympathy from others. They have a greater fear of unknown, display irritating behaviour, become impatient and tend to blame others for the inefficiency. Workers who are seriously affected loose confidence in themselves and display a low productivity. To overcome this situation, individuals should be kept busy, put through promotional cadres and subjected to regular physical exercises. This reduces work stress and help individual to develop.

Behavioral Response

Chohen⁶ carried out studies on the impact of stress on human-being. As per the study people under constant stress behave differently as compared to the people who are emotionally balanced. High level of stress is usually associated with smoking, increased use of alcohol and consumption of drugs. They are either defensive or offensive in their behaviour. Stress induces irrational interpersonal behaviour. They withdraw from the social environment and confine themselves to isolation.

Frustration

Frustration is a form of behaviour which occurs when a person is prevented from achieving a goal or objective. It refers to obstruction or impediment to goal oriented behaviour. Frustration is caused **firstly** due to delay in getting advancement or recognition through a promotion is insight. One even get frustrated waiting for some one to meet at a scheduled time and date. **Secondly** non availability of various resources. A faculty member may not be able to carryout research work because he is over burdened with other responsibilities. He may get frustrated due to non – availability of time resource. The **third** cause of frustration is non attainment of goal. For example failure in the examination, non attainment of production or sales target, failure to get promotion are some of the causes of frustration which are manifested in stress.

Anxiety

Jit S Chandan⁷ explains “anxiety” as a feeling of inability and helplessness in formulating appropriate responses for dealing with the anticipated negative outcome. It occurs when a decision has to be made but the outcome of the decision could have positive as well as negative consequences. Anxiety also occur when there is situation when one does not know as to what is right. For example, an employee is serving in an organization for over ten years and fully satisfied with the organizational culture but asked to move on promotion to a different organization and to a far away place. Hammer and Organ⁸ explains various causes of anxiety in the work environment. They explained that “difference in power in the organization which leave people with a feeling of vulnerability to administrative decisions adversely affecting them. These are as under:-

- (a) Frequent changes in organizations, which make existing behaviour plans obsolete.
- (b) Competition, which creates the inevitability that some persons lose “face”, esteem and status.
- (c) Job ambiguity (especially when it is coupled with pressure).
- (d) Lack of job feedback, volatility in the organizations’ economic environment, job insecurity and high visibility of one’s performance (success as well as failures).
- (e) Personal problems such as physical illness, problems at home, unrealistically high personal goals and estrangement from one’s colleagues or one’s peer group.

Stressors Intrinsic to Job

The nature of the job will determine the level of stress it carry with it. A railway engine dreiver’s job is more stressful as it does not have control over the time and attached with it is a high degree of responsibility due to number of passenger travelling in the train. The driver does not have control over the safety of passengers hence it is more stressful. High stress jobs are those in which the employees have little or no control over the operations, work under time constraints and have major responsibilities for human beings and other resources. There are high stress jobs like defence services, police, foreman, mangers, inspector, etc. On the contrary there are low stress jobs like teachers, craft worker, farm labour. Studies carried out by Karasek⁹ has indicated higher risk of coronary diseases to those who work under high stress jobs. He identified two job factors that affect the level of such risk. These factors are firstly “level of psychological demand” and the “level of decision control” over the work. According to this study jobs are categorized in the following manner:

- (a) Low psychological demand/ Low decision control. Eg. Watchman, truck driver.
- (b) Low psychological demand/ High decision control. Eg. Mechanic, sales clerk.
- (c) High psychological demand/ High decision control. Eg. Sales manger, bank officer.
- (d) High psychological demand/ Low decision control. Eg. waitress, telephone operator, cook etc.

Role Ambiguity

Role of every individual must be clearly defined. According to Kahn* role is a set of activities associated with certain position in the organization or in the society. If these work activities are ill defined, then the person will not perform his duties as others expect him to do so. When there is ambiguity about role expectation. Then people in the organization experience certain amount of stress. Generally, role of a person is associated with the appointment he holds and duties of various appointments are well laid down and time tested. If a person is holding station masters job, his duties are clear and there is a little scope for ambiguity. This is only possible in bureaucratic or traditional organizations. Role ambiguity is more pronounced with the organizations which are fluid in nature and subject to change with environment factors. Role ambiguity is also noticed in managerial cadre where job specifications and roles are not clearly defined because of the general nature of the job. Principle of unity of command is not followed strictly and therefore there is always a conflict about reporting channels. French and Caplan¹⁰ in their studies concluded that role ambiguity causes

- (1) Psychological strain and dissatisfaction.
- (2) Leads to under utilization of human resources, and
- (3) Leads to feeling of futility on how to cope with the organizational environment

Role Conflict

Role conflict occurs when individuals have a variety of expectation from another individual who is not able to meet their demands placed on him. A person may not be capable of handling two or more pressures at any one time. Employees may be demanding rise in salary, which a manager feels as genuine but he cannot recommend to the management due to latter's pressure. Role conflict occurs when contradictory demands are simultaneously placed upon an employee. Role conflict also occur when an individual has to play more than one role simultaneously. A manager can not permit his wife (an employee) to go home before time or he may not accept lower quality of work on one hand, but may neglect quantity on the other. There is stress due to inter – role conflict. Robert Kahn¹¹ and his colleagues at University of Michigan concluded that contradictory role expectations give rise to opposing role pressures (role conflict) which generally have the following effects on the emotional experience of the focal person : Intensified internal conflicts, increased tension associated with various aspect of the job, reduced satisfaction with the job and its various components, and decreased confidence in superiors and in the organization as a whole. The strain experienced by those in conflict situations lead to various coping responses as social and psychological withdrawal among them. “Finally the presence of conflict in one's role tends to undermine his relations with his role senders to produce weaker bonds of trust, respect and attraction. It is quite clear that role conflicts are costly for the person in emotional and interpersonal terms. They may be costly to the organization, which depends on effective coordination and collaboration, within and among its parts”.

BURNOUT

Burnout is a type of existential crisis in which work is no longer a meaningful function. Workers who experience burnout may no longer view their job as meaningful. They feel work as tedious, redundant, and insignificant. They experience total fatigue which may show itself in the form of boredom, depression and a powerful sense of alienation. Work related behaviour of executives indicate very little concern for quality, creativity, enthusiasm and contribution to organizational goals.

Morely and Katherine (1982)¹² in their work on the subject have identified the pattern of behaviour burned out executives. They concluded that predictable behaviour is as under:

- (a) Tendency to balance others in the organization for their burnout.
- (b) To complain bitterly about aspects of work which in the past were not areas of concern.
- (c) To miss work because of non-specific and increasingly prevalent illness.
- (d) To daydream and sleep on the job.
- (e) To be last to come and the first to leave.
- (f) To bicker with co-workers or appear unco-operative and to become increasingly isolated from others.

Causes of Burnout

1. **Work Estimation:** Overwork is generally considered to be a major cause for burnout. But it not so. Burnout take place in a chaotic, unstable environment. It often happens when there is a confusion about duties and future managerial directions. Burnout takes place when there is management by crisis. Low work estimation may also cause burnout. When executives feel that there is no challenge and innovativeness in the work, burnout take place.
2. **Job Mismatch:** It has been observed that executives choose and accept jobs which has higher extrinsic reward like high salaries and power. These hygiene factors generally fail to motivate executives for a longer time. Decision to choose extrinsic reward over intrinsic rewards results in unhappiness. Job mismatch may be observed in personal value and organizational value system and autonomy provided by organization in work environment. Lack of gratification from the work generally leads to burnout.

Organizational Productivity

When executive are not able to meet organizational objective due to external environmental factors like shortage of raw material, government rules, market demand etc., they experience a burnout. They feel a sense of helplessness. Burnout may also be noticed where there is a strict bureaucratic way of doing things and very little scope for exploitation of personal skills, innovation and creativity.

Personal Problems

Personal problems like unhappy married life, financial instability, children education, job security may cause stress leading to burnout. Persons with a predisposition to burnout may be badly affected by problems unrelated to work.

Prevention of Burnout

As seen in the preceding reading, burnout emanate from organizational policy, structure, practices, nature of the work and personal characteristics of the individual. Probability of burnout increases if there is a mismatch between individual and job fit.

Preventive measures include diagnosis, prevention and treatment.

Diagnosis

It is the responsibility of all individuals to ensure that his subordinate is not subjected to burnout. This can be identified from the early warning by observing clinical signs that include the following:

- (a) Feeling of lethargy.
- (b) Lack of productivity.
- (c) Lack of interest in the present job and feeling that change of job and place may change the present situation without even considering upward mobility.
- (d) Feeling of loneliness, forced isolation and acute discomfort.
- (e) Feeling of direction less.
- (f) Traumatic personal problems like death in family or major accident.

Prevention

Morley and Katherine¹² have suggested the following preventive and treatment strategies:

- (a) Seeking a fit between characteristics of the individual, complexity of the job and type of organizational structure.
- (b) Developing programmes which help individuals cope with the causes of stress that lead to burnout.
- (c) Teaching and supporting self – diagnosis and individual adaptation strategies for addressing burnout symptoms.

Treatment

- (a) Evaluate and understand the cause of burnout.
- (b) Determine change both personal and organizational to return to normal work – related functioning.
- (c) Develop sensitivity to the signs of burnout to cope with likelihood of the same in future.
- (d) Develop skills to deal with feelings and emotions to avoid burnout to fellow employees.

Role Overload / Under Load

It has been observed that organizations are resorting to promote employees to take voluntary retirement (VRS). In addition employees are being retrenched to cut down on the production cost to be able to be competitive in the market. This has led to excessive work-load to the employees. In this situation they feel that they do not have adequate time or ability to meet such requirements. When targets have to be met, employees have to work over time. At times they even have to handle more than one job to cater for absent workers. Role overload occurs when there is too much work, too little time or lack of skills.

Role underload is an opposite phenomenon to role overload. It occurs when person's skill and ability is under utilized, there is a lack of job variety or the contents of the job is so small that the person feels that his potentials are not been fully utilized. Workers who suffer from work underload experience lack of interest in the job and leads to excessive absenteeism. It ultimately results in low self-esteem and lack of job satisfaction.

Responsibility

Responsibility is a factor for work stress. People who are in finance department have to complete accounts of the organization before a scheduled date. This increases work load and stress merely because it has to be computed before a particular time. It causes a sense of burden upon an individual. Efficiency of a manager is greatly affected by the efficiency and quality of work produced by subordinates. If anything goes wrong, it is a leader who is accountable for it. This aspect causes stress upon a manger.

French and Caplin¹⁰ state. If there is any truth to the adage that “man's greatest enemy is himself”, it can be found in these data – it is the responsibility which organizational members have for other organizational members, rather than the responsibility for impersonal aspects of the organization, which constitutes the more significant organizational stress”.

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS

Individual Level Strategies

Minimum level of stress is required to stimulate individuals to higher productivity. Excessive stress is harmful to both individual and organization. It is a common practice to evolve various stress reduction strategies in the organizations. Individuals must take steps to reduce stress to a acceptable level. It is clarified that every individual has different capacity to cope with individual stress. Some of the individual stress reduction strategies are as under:

1. **Define objective for Self:** Setting up of objective for self is a continuous process right from the childhood where parents generally decide as to the stream of learning, institutes and the like. When you join an organization, it is important to study organizational structure, job involved and the prospects of growth. Every person must set for himself the object vis – vis the ability and skill one possesses. It is generally observed that individuals set high objective for themselves to be achieved in short span of time. They inhibit inbuilt fear of failing. Setting up of high standard without analyzing resources available leads to stressful situation. People must modify their goals based upon various resources available, ‘time’ being the most important resource.
2. **Plan your life:** Work stress has an impact on personal life at home and vice – versa. It is therefore important to plan various aspects of life as is possible. This will include increasing professional competence by way of acquiring additional qualification and skill, sound financial planning, home, children education and so on. Contingency plan must also be evolved in case of uncertainty. If this is done, a person is physically and mentally prepared for events to come. Investment in insurance for children education may make you free from ‘stress’ if it was planned well in advance.
3. **Social Support:** A man is becoming isolated like an island in vast ocean due to breaking of joint family system, requirement of moving out of home for service purposes and thereby losing physical contacts with kith and kin. It is important to keep close rapport with relatives. At closer to work place develop friendship with fellow workers who can help in times of crisis, stress and strain. Social support can be easily built by adhering to social functions, norms and following religious activities at work place. This will enable individuals to regain sulking self confidence and build self-esteem. People have resorted to GOD in old age. Old age homes, citizens committees etc. are signs of existence of stress and evolving of stress resolution strategies. The practice of confession to a priest in the Catholic religion is nothing but a way to eliminate stress caused by some action.
4. **Physical Fitness:** Healthy body and mind are stress resistance. It has been conclusively proved that individuals who exercise and so strengthen their endurance and cardiovascular system, are much less likely to suffer from certain types of stress related illness¹³. Regular physical exercises like walking, jogging, light gymnastics exercises keep person fit and develop an ability to sustain greater level of stress. Soldiers are definitely more stress resistant as they keep themselves

- physically fit. They develop an ability and mind to withstand worst of the situations. Appropriate daily diet help individual to keep good health.
5. **Biofeedback:** Biofeedback is the human ability to bring some of the bodily functions under voluntary control. It is the methodology designed to remove undesirable body responses through psychological transformation. Use of sophisticated electronics devices are designed to measure the level of stress in an individual. With subsequent relaxation or yogic exercises the individual is brought back to normal standard situation by removing stress. The relaxation exercises are helpful to control heart attacks, acidity, brain haemorrhage, blood pressure and muscle tension etc. Changes in these deceases are caused due to high level of stress which an individual is not habitual to experience. Biofeedback takes care to control the effects of stress on voluntary basis by proper exercises.
 6. **Yoga:** Yoga is a methodology to integrate body and mind and achieve a required level of harmony with the God. This is achieved by physical exercises called Asanas which stimulates various systems in the body like respiratory system, nervous system, blood circulation system etc. This brings a remarkable change into individuals physical capacity and mental ability to sustain through various stress and strain situations. Yoga is also considered as a process of attainment of ultimate peace. But for a common man, it is merely the physical exercises which are aimed at healthy body and mind to counter stress.
 7. **Meditation:** Indian history is replete of examples of various saints having achieved salvation by meditation. Lord Gautam Budha had achieved 'nirwana' by meditation. Meditation involves sitting at quite place, closing eyes and concentrating on some symbol with uttering of simple world like 'OM'. It is aimed at total concentration thus forgetting routine situations. This technique also caters for syncranised breathing exercises aim being to block extraneous thoughts from one's mind. Meditation is combination of body, concentration of mind on a particular symbol, utterance of words, regulating of breathing thereby achieving a total concentration of body and mind to achieve a super natural personal power. If this is achieved a person can comfortably handle stressful situation with ease. Meditation brings peace to the mind, develops tolerance power, improves personality and ultimately leads to sainthood.
 8. **Time Management:** Time management is one of the methods of reducing stress. Life has become very fast. Executives down to a common worker is pressed for time. Everybody has to play various roles in life. All the roles have to be performed in a given span of time. It is therefore necessary to plan time adequately. Time management can be for various events in life like education, marriage etc. Day to day level, it is related to planning daily routine events. Every individual must maintain a diary in which work schedule and progress should be reflected when more than one job is required to be done at a particular time, priority should be accorded to comparatively important job. It is important to keep up to the schedule of events as planned and ensure the same from the subordinates. This eases pressure on the work schedule and facilitates managing private/ personal work. It instills in an individual a habit of punctuality and a greater sense of responsibility and commitment to the organization.

- 9. Live a simple Life:** It is advisable that every person should live a simple life free from cumbrances. Too much of issues being handled at any one time saps individuals energy. One should not complicate issues rather provide simple, straight forward solutions. Do not ask your subordinates to wait for any decision or action on your part. Cases must be disposed off fast without loss of time. In personal life too simplicity of behaviour help individual resolve issues in time. This reduces tension and facilitates time management.

Organizational Level Strategies

Organization play a decisive role in ensuring peaceful environment free of stress. Basically stress relates to two categories of events. First the organizational structure and policy and second relating to personal development and growth that the job can provide. Following aspects must be carefully examined and evaluated for its effectiveness and implementation.

- (a) Organizational goals must be in realms of achievement. Too much high goals not only put the employees under undue stress but also creates unhealthy work environment.
- (b) Organizational polices should be clearly defined with particular reference to training and development, promotion, leave, wages and salary administration, discipline, incentives, etc.
- (c) Authority and responsibility must be clearly defined by setting up reporting channels. Principle of unity of command should be adhared to.
- (d) Organizational structure, redesigning of jobs and improved communication reduces stress.
- (e) Corporate policies, physical work environment should be suitable for higher productivity.
- (f) An updated systems and processes increases efficiency.
- (g) Management must create an healthy working environment.
- (h) Career plan for mangers must be developed and implemented in letter and spirit. Nothing discourages employees as bad developmental programmes.
- (i) Employees must be empowered. They should be provided with suitable time to time counselling by way of advice, reassurance, good communication, release of emotional tension and clarified thinking. Re-orientation is important to keep employees free of stress for increased productivity.

SUMMARY

Stress is non specific response of the body to any demand. Employees experience stress due to organizational climate and work environment. Excessive stress causes physical and mental disturbance. The external factors responsible for individual stress are social setting, work ethics, leadership style, availability of resources, workload, technology and work environment. Internal factors are psychological in nature and may include emotions, ego state, attitude, perception and level of motivation. These put together cause imbalance and disequilibrium and lead to stress. Hans Selve has referred to general adatation syndrome (GAS) which has three stages namely alarm stage, resistance and exhaustion stage. Ivancevich and Matterson have identified social, economic,financial, cultural, familial and technological factors which have tremendous impact on mental health of the employees.

Stress causes frustration and anxiety. The job related stress includes role ambiguity, role conflict, burnout, and role overload/underload. It is important to reduce stress so that the efficiency of the employees is improved. Stress can be managed by achieving physical fitness, biofeedback, yoga, meditation, time management, and by living a simple life. Organizations play a vital role in combating stress. The factors include among others are setting up of realistic goals, well defined organizational policy, restructuring organizational structure when needed, corporate policy update, healthy work environment and empowerment.

TEXT QUESTIONS

- Q. 1 Explain stress. How does it create imbalance and disequilibrium?
- Q. 2 What are various external and internal causes of stress?
- Q. 3 Explain work stress, what are various steps that a manager should take to reduce stress among employees?
- Q. 4 What do you understand by burnout, how can employees avoid it/ what steps a manager take to prevent employees from burnout?
- Q. 5 Explain stress management strategies?
- Q. 6 What are various organizational strategies for management of stress?
- Q. 7 Visit an organization in the vicinity of your location and study stress management adopted by them.

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Case

MRS. BATRA

Mrs. Batra has been working in the administration department of a hospital in Mumbai for the last 20 years. She is highly dedicated to her job and has a very good rapport with her superiors and co-workers. About eight months ago, she was promoted into the upper ranks of management and was assigned to the supply department of the hospital as a manager. Everybody was happy for her and congratulated her on her promotion. The employees in this new department welcomed her and promised her all the cooperation. Mrs. Batra finds the job very challenging and psychologically rewarding.

She is a very good manager and an interesting person. Everyone in her department likes to come to work because Mrs. Batra makes the day interesting. Since she became the manager, absenteeism is down by over 20 per cent. She has very pleasant personality and is always available to help her subordinates. She is efficient, responsible and responds to all communication in timely manner. She attends all meetings fully prepared to discuss all issues under consideration. This is, she was, at least until last month.

During the last month, she seems to have changed considerably for the worse. Both her superiors and her subordinates find her behaviour strange. She is not as polite and amicable as she used to be. Last week she missed a very important meeting of the top administrators. She was requested to research an issue and prepare the material to present at the weekly meeting. She did not do so. She is often late to work and does not take much interest in the communication she receives from superiors and other departments and does not respond to these memorandums in a timely manner. She has become aloof and seems tired most of the time.

The Director of the hospital, Mr. Verma, noticed this change in her behaviour early and has been covertly monitoring her behaviour for the last three weeks. Early today, Mr. Verma had a talk with one of the in-house psychiatrists explaining Mrs. Batra's changing work behaviour patterns. The psychiatrist, Dr. Rekhi suggested that perhaps she has been over-working herself and takes the job too seriously. Mr. Verma suggested to Dr. Rekhi that he should talk to Mrs. Batra and find out if there were any difficult situations at home that might be affecting her behaviour. Mrs. Batra has been married for over 20 years and has no children. Mr. Verma is concerned that Mrs. Batra ought to get help before she suffers a total collapse. Dr. Rekhi promised to do so.

QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the symptoms of overload? Does, Mrs. Batra seem to suffer from over-working conditions? Explain your reasons.
2. Given this information, do you think that there may be marital problems at her home that are affecting her work? Could it also be that her work is affecting her family life that is further affecting her work? Justify your speculations.

Based upon: Richard M. Hodgetts, Organizational Behaviour, MacMillan Publishing Company, 1991, adopted from "Organizational Behaviour", 3rd Edition, 2005. Edited by Jit S. Chandan, Published by Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi.
