Dynamics of Stress

Dr. Farooq A Shah
Department of Management Studies
Central University of Kashmir
Stress: The Essence of Life

- The soldier who sustains wounds in battle, the mother who worries about her soldier son; the gambler who watches the races, the horse and the jockey he bet on; they are all under stress.

- The beggar who suffers from hunger and the glutton who overeats; the little shopkeeper with his constant fears of bankruptcy and the rich merchant for yet another; they are also under stress.

- The housewife who tries to keep her children out of trouble, the child who scalds himself and especially the particular cells of the skin over which he spilled the boiling coffee; they too are under stress.

- This is a fundamental question in the life of everyone; it touches closely upon the essence of life of everyone.

(HANS SELYE, 1956)
Salient Features of Stress

- Stress level is on the gradual rise
- Stress is additive in nature
- Stress has a spillover effect
- Stress *per se* is not bad

- *Distress*
- *Eustress*
What is Stress?

In Physical Sciences:
Stress is the force, pressure or tension exerted on a material object that disturbs its homeostasis and strain is the resultant perversion or distortion.

In Behavioral Sciences:
“Stress is a state of psychological and/or physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demands and the individual’s ability and motivation to meet those needs.”
What is Stress?

A dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both important and uncertain.
Stress Perspectives

- Stress: A stimulus
- Stress: A response
- Stress: An interaction

(three dimensional perspective)

Interaction between stimulus and response
And moderated by intervening factors
General Adaptation Syndrome (Hans Selye)

- Resistance Level
- Alarm Stage
- Resistance Stage
- Exhaustion Stage

Duration of Exposure to Stress

NORMAL LEVEL OF RESISTANCE

ACTUAL LEVEL OF RESISTANCE
Three stages of adaptation (GAS)

- **Alarm reaction stage**
  - Perception of stressor
  - Initial shock phase
  - Distortion of homeostasis
  - Lowered resistance
  - Changes in bodily functions: heart rate, blood pressure, increased release of hormones...
  - Followed by heightened resistance
Three stages of adaptation (GAS)

- **Resistance stage**
  - Ability to cope rises above normal level because of activated defense mechanisms
  - Long term high level adaptation
  - Adaptation aimed at restoration of homeostasis
  - In case situation prolongs, the adaptation reaches to the next stage

- **Exhaustion stage**
  - Body must rest and recover from heightened resistance stage
  - Long term high level resistance depletes energy reserves
  - Prolonged resistance leads to systemic breakdown
  - If situation persists, there is exhaustion and collapse
Criticism of GAS model

- Based on research conducted on infra-human subjects where stressors are mostly physical
- Essentially stimulus oriented, ignoring the role of subject’s response and the interaction thereof
- Adaptation process is not same for all in all situations
- Existence of a non-specific response is not always true especially in case of physical stressors
- Reactions from non-human subjects are more perceptible and measureable as compared to human responses
Dimensions of Stress

- **Overstress** (Hyperstress)
- **Negative Stress** (Distress)
- **Stress Variations**
- **Understress** (Hypostress)
- **Positive Stress** (Eustress)
Dimensions of Stress

- Hyperstress/Hypostress
- Distress
- Optimal Stress
- Eustress
Stress-performance Relationship

Level of Performance

Level of Stress

LOW STRESS
- Boredom
- Frustration
- Dissatisfaction

OPTIMUM STRESS
- Creativity
- Progress
- Improvement
- Satisfaction

HIGH PERFORMANCE ZONE

HIGH STRESS
- Exhaustion
- Surrender
- Illness

BURNOUT ZONE
Why Role Stress instead of Job/Work?

**JOB/WORK**
- It is a relationship of authority and responsibility.
- Relationship between a worker and others from the formal group only.

**ROLE**
- It is a relationship of expectations and obligations.
- Relationship between the role occupant and various role-senders, from both formal & informal domains.
Inter-role Distance (IRD)

A situation of stress that arises due to conflict between different roles one occupies simultaneously. Consider the incompatibility between your role as a parent and as a member of the organisation.
Role Stagnation (RS)

A feeling which arises because the role gets stagnant and does not grow with the growth of the individual or the individual gets stagnant and does not grow proportionately with the growth of the role.

Either too much of monotony in role or too much of change in role causes role stagnation.
**Role Expectation Conflict (REC)**

A stress situation that arises due to conflicting and inimical expectations and demands from various role-senders (e.g. conflicting expectations from the boss and subordinates).
Role Erosion (RE)

A condition of stress arising when a role has been reduced in importance or somebody else gets the credit for doing what is expected to be done in the incumbent’s own role.
Role Overload (RO)
A state of stress where the role occupant feels that she is required to do too much or too difficult a job within the available time and resources.
It includes both quantitative as well as qualitative overload.
**Role Isolation (RI)**

A situation where the role occupant feels that certain roles in the role-set are, psychologically and emotionally, at a distance.

Weak linkages in the organisational role-set mean high role isolation and vice versa.
DIMENSIONS OF ROLE STRESS

 Glyric

Personal Inadequacy (P-In)

A stress that occurs when the role occupant feels that his /her personal competence and skills are inadequate to meet the requirements of his/her role. Lack of HRD interventions in organizations causes this kind of stress.
DIMENSIONS OF ROLE STRESS

(currency symbol) **Self-role Distance (SRD)**

A state of stress where role occupants find a gap between their values and beliefs and the roles they are to play in their work settings.
Role Ambiguity (RA)

A condition of stress where there is lack of clarity by the role occupants about the expectations and the requirements of the job assignments. Lack of information or understanding in relation to the activities, responsibilities, norms or priorities in the job cause this kind of stress.
Resource Inadequacy (R In)

A condition of stress arising out of a feeling that the material, physical, financial, manpower resources available are inadequate to meet the requirements of one’s role.
STRESS MODEL

Potential Sources of Stress

- Individual
- Organisational
- Environmental

Individual Differences

Stress Experience

Consequences of Stress

- Physiological
- Psychological
- Behavioural
Individual Sources/Factors

- Family and personal/social relationships
- Economic/financial problems
- Personality characteristics and individual dispositions
Organizational Sources/Factors

- Role related stresses
- Organizational structure
- Organizational culture and climate
- Leadership and Managerial style
- Organization’s life stage
- Job and physical conditions
External/Environmental Sources

- Economic uncertainties
- Political uncertainties
- Technological uncertainties
- Other external/environmental factors
Individual differences/Moderators of stress experience & coping

- Personality Type: Type A & Type B
- Individual Dispositions:
  - Perception
  - Self Efficacy
- Locus of Control:
  - Internality vs Externality
- Social, Emotional & Material Support Experience
Consequences of Stress

- Physiological Consequences
- Psychological Consequences
- Behavioural Consequences
Physiological Consequences

- **Cardiovascular diseases**
  - Hypertension
  - CHD/ cardiac failures

- **Debilitated Immune system**
  - Susceptibility to infections

- **Stomach disorders**
  - Gastric and Peptic Ulcers
Sexual disorders
- Loss of sexual appetite
- Amenorrhoea

Malignancy and cancers

Bronchial asthma

Tumors

Diabetes

Headaches, backaches & limb aches
Psychological Consequences

- Job dissatisfaction
- Reduced job involvement/commitment
- Anxiety and tension
- Depression
- Anger and Irritability
- Boredom
- Job burnout and emotional fatigue
Consequences for Organizations:

- Low job performance/low productivity
- Absenteeism
- Employee turnover
- Workplace hostility & aggression
- Workplace accidents
Consequences for individuals/workers:

- Under-eating/over-eating
- Sleep disorders
- Alcoholics
- Increased smoking
- Drug abuse
- Aggression/interpersonal problems
- Accidents
In its Annual Wellness Report (2014), world’s largest provider of Employee Assistance Program ComPsych found that 38% of employees persistently keep thinking about job stress related problems.

In the U.S., on an average, due to work stress, a worker remains absent from work for 13 days in a year.

The [World Health Organization](http://www.who.int) estimates that stress costs American businesses $300 billion a year.

Stress has been the most common cause of long-term sickness absence for both manual and non-manual employees in CIPD’s [2014 Absence Management Survey](http://www.cipd.co.uk).
Survey conducted by Regus Plc (an MNC in the business of providing innovative workplace solutions) on 11,000 respondents in 13 countries.

The survey said 44.9% of Indian workers are particularly stressed by the increased focus on profitability, more than the workers of any other country surveyed.

Fear of unemployment/business failure: 22.1%
Pressure to maintain excellent customer service: 33%
About 79% of Indian executives’ visits to doctors are because of work stress.

A recent report says that productivity loss and ailments due to work related stress is likely to cost India’s exchequer around Rs. 72000 crores between 2009 and 2015.
Thanks !

and

Queries ?