Chapter – IV

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF STRESS MANAGEMENT
4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century context stress is a costly business expense in the corporate world that affects both employee health and company profits. People live in a crowded, polluted and noisy society. The human being lives are at the mercy of deadlines because of modern technology. Mobile phones, faxes, computers, satellites and many more such inventions increase demands and pressures. Present day stress is not a unique problem because human kind has suffered stress since the dawn of human evolution. However, modern society has undergone more complex and radical changes in the span of a few years than in the whole of human evolution.

Every one needs a certain amount of stimulus to make life interesting or most efficient. But this stimulation called pressure is a little different from stress. If pressure is excessive or far too long, it can become stress. Stress can vary depending upon the people. If pressure is mild it improves employee performance. But excess pressure reduces performance and efficiency.

There are many benefits of living in our fast modern industrialized world. However, the modern society has created complex demands on our psychological and physiological health. People do not need to return to the stone age to regain our health. Only people need to learn how to deal with stress in a more positive way and less destructive manner using skills and knowledge.
It is impossible to remove all the stress from life but people can learn strategies to eliminate excessive stress.

Today people have fewer friends, live in a more frustrated and isolated society with lower levels of social support, which is an important buffer of stress. People are less physically active and eat poorer diets. Over population, higher level of crime rates, increasing drug and alcohol misuse, many worldwide tragedies of famine, flood and war steep levels of debt and greater urbanization all lead to higher incidence of stress-related problems like anxiety and depression.

Stress is the "wear and tear" of human bodies caused by frequently changing environment. It has physical and emotional effects. It can create positive or negative feelings. Positive influence of stress can help and compel us to action; it can result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective. Negative influence can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, depression, and lead to health problems such as headaches, upset stomach, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. Stress can help or hinder us depending on how we react to it. Chennai traffic police are getting mostly negative effect from stress because of poor work environment, work overload, insufficient facilities lack of manpower and so on. This chapter explains the concept of stress, types of stress, model of stress and strategies and methods for managing stress.
4.2 CONCEPT OF STRESS

Stress is somewhat a difficult concept to define largely because it is such a unique, individual and subjective experience. It is derived from the Latin word1 “Stringer”. It was popularly used in the seventeenth century to mean hardship, straits, adversity or affliction. In physical science, the term stress refers to the internal force generated within a solid body by the action of any external force. A few definitions of stress are given below and they are useful according to scope and clarity.

Arnold (1960)2 defines, “Stress is any condition that disturbs normal functioning”.

Lazarus (1966)3 defines, “Stress refers to physiological, behavioural and cognitive responses to events appraised as threatening or exceeding one’s coping responses and options.”

Hans Selye (1974)4 defines, “Stress is a non-specific response of the body to any demand.”

Cooper and Marshall (1979)5 defines, “Stress is a stimulus or situation to which man reacts with learned coping mechanism activated by homeostasis principle and fuelled by energies which are infinite supply.”
Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1985)\(^6\) pointed out that, it is vertically impossible today to read extensively any of the biological or social sciences without running into the term ‘Stress’. This concept is even more extensively discussed in the health care fields and it is found also in economics, political science, business and education.

Cox (1993)\(^7\) defines, “Stress is now understood as a psychological state that results from people’s perceptions of an imbalance between job demands and their abilities to cope with those demands.”

Health and Safety Commission (1999)\(^8\) defines, “Stress is the reaction that people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them.”

Aswathappa. K (2007)\(^9\) Defines, “Stress is an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological and / or behavioural deviations for organization participations.”

Stephen P. Robbins et al (2007)\(^10\) has defined “Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, demand, or resource related to what the individual desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important.”

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From the above definitions it is clear that stress:

1. Disturbs normal functions.
2. Threatens the person.
3. Reduces skills and abilities
4. It makes a person misfit for a job.
5. Creates imbalance between job demands and their abilities to cope with demands.
6. Affects person psychologically as well as physiologically.

4.3 TYPES OF STRESS

According to Pestonjee stress can be categorized into four major types such as eustress, distress, hyper stress, and hypo stress. Generally distress and hyper stress are affecting the Chennai traffic police.

i. Eustress

Eustress is a type of short-term stress that provides immediate strength. This stress arises at points of increased physical activity, enthusiasm and creativity. Eustress is a positive stress that arises when motivation and inspiration are needed. It raises the level of employee performance.
ii. Distress

Distress is a negative stress. It is brought out by constant readjustments or routine alterations. Distress creates feelings of discomfort and unfamiliarity. This stress affects job performance adversely and creates many types of physical, psychological and behavioural problems. There are two types of distress such as:

a) Acute stress

Acute stress is an intense stress that arrives and disappears quickly.

b) Chronic stress

Chronic stress is a prolonged stress that exists for weeks, or even years. This type of stress is experienced by someone who is constantly relocating or contemplating job changes.

iii. Hyper stress

Hyper stress occurs when an individual is pushed beyond what he or she can handle. The overload or overwork leads to hyper stress. If someone is hyper stressed, even little things can trigger a strong emotional response. It is important for persons who think they might be experiencing hyper stress to take
measures to reduce stress in their lives, because hyper stress can lead to serious emotional and physical repercussions.

iv. Hypo stress

Hypo stress is the opposite of hyper stress. Hypo stress occurs when an individual is bored by an unchallenged job, such as a worker performing the same task over and over. The effect of hypo stress is a feeling of restlessness and lack of inspiration.

4.4 CAUSES OF STRESS

Stress has positive and negative value. It is an opportunity when it offers potential gain. Some stress can be good, and some can be bad. Stephen P. Robbins\textsuperscript{12} said that challenge stress or stress associated with challenges in the work environment operates quite differently from hindrance stress, or stress that keeps from reaching goals. The early evidence suggests that challenge stress has fewer negative implications than hindrance stress.

Stress is associated with demands and resources. Demands are responsibilities, pressures, obligations, and even uncertainties that individuals face in the workplace. Resources are things within an individual’s control that can be used to resolve the demands. Figure 4.1 explain causes of stress briefly.
FIGURE 4.1

A MODEL OF STRESS

Potential sources of stress

Environmental factors
- Economic uncertainty
- Political uncertainty
- Technological change

Organizational factors
- Task demands
- Role demands
- Interpersonal demands

Personal factors
- Family problems
- Economic problems
- Personality

Consequences of stress

Individual differences
- Perception
- Job experience
- Social support
- Belief in locus of control
- Self-efficacy
- Hostility

Experienced stress

Physiological symptoms
- Headaches
- High blood pressure

Psychological symptoms
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Decrease in job satisfaction

Behavioral symptoms
- Productivity
- Absenteeism
- Turnover

Source: Stephen P. Robbins, Organizational Behavior, p. 737
4.4.1 POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESS

There are three categories of potential stressors such as environmental, organizational, and personal factors.

a) Environmental factors

Environmental uncertainty influences the design of an organization’s structure, it also influences stress level among employees in an organization. Changes in the business cycle create economic uncertainties. When the economy is contracting, people become anxious about their job security. Political uncertainties like threats and changes can induce stress. According to The Hindu\(^{13}\) newspaper survey the technological changes and poor work environment factors can cause stress for traffic police. The following work environment is affecting Chennai traffic police adversely.

1. Job exposed to high levels of air pollution.
2. Job environment is often too hot.
3. Job environment is often very dusty.
4. Job environment is often very noisy.
5. Glare of powerful head lights during nights.
6. Nervousness due to high speed vehicles, moving all around.
7. No protection from weather.
8. Disturbed mood when witnessing accidents.
9. Political influence and so on.
b) **Organizational factors**

The poor organizational factors cause stress among the employees such as pressures to avoid errors or complete tasks within a limited time, work overload, a demanding and insensitive boss and unpleasant coworkers and so on. It has categorized these factors around task, role and interpersonal demands. The Chennai traffic police are not satisfied with their organizational factors because of more work load, lack of man power, lack of understanding between subordinate and superior.

Task demands factors are related to a person’s job. It includes the design of the individual’s job, working conditions, and the physical work layout. Working in an overcrowded room or in a visible location where noise and interruptions are constant can increase anxiety and stress. According to Times of India Newspaper\(^{14}\) survey Chennai traffic police task demands are very high because of insufficient manpower and rapidly increasing number of vehicles. This survey also indicates that Chennai city’s noise pollution is increasing day by day. If it is not yet controlled very soon people will lose hearing ability. Chennai traffic police used to get anxiety because of high speed vehicles, more number of accidents, highly polluted environment and over crowd.

Role demands relate to pressures placed on a person as a function of the particular role he or she plays in the organization. Role conflicts create
expectations that may be hard to reconcile or satisfy. Role overload is experienced when the employee is expected to do more than time permits. Role ambiguity is created when role expectations are not clearly understood and the employee is not sure what he or she is to do. According to Times of India Newspaper\textsuperscript{15} survey Chennai traffic police personnel are not able to do alternate work during emergencies because of lack of manpower. Nearly 95 percent of traffic police come to duty even on their weekly holidays.

Interpersonal demands are pressures created by other employees. Lack of social support from colleagues and poor interpersonal relationship can cause stress, especially among employees with a high social need. Chennai traffic police have good relationship within peer level but this good relationship does not exist between superiors and subordinates. This poor relationship causes stress for them. A continual violation of traffic rules and regulations by public creates more tension and work stress.

c) Personal factors

The family issues, personal economic problems, and inherent personality characteristics encompass the employee’s personal life. Chennai traffic police are not able to do justice to their family responsibility because of long work hours. Both the family duties and individual’s official work are affected.
National surveys consistently show that people hold family and personal relationships such as marital difficulties, the breaking relationship, and discipline troubles with children as the result of stress. These sorts of relationship problems degrade work performance. According to Deccan Chronicle\textsuperscript{16} Newspaper survey the work demand is very high for traffic police in Chennai city because of excessive traffic congestion, bad roads, lack of manpower, and vast increase of vehicles.

Employees can perform very well when they have the optimum workload. In this parameter, traffic police have too much of work in Chennai city. Work is also heavy due to the nature of work like standing in hot sun for long hours and moving here and there continuously and so on. Traffic police are getting tired even during short working hours because of constant vigil for long hours. The followings are the important reasons which create over workload.

1. Continuously increasing vehicle population.
2. Traffic jams.
3. Poor maintenance of vehicles resulting in sudden breakdowns on the road that creates more traffic jam.
4. Managing security for VIPs.
5. Narrow road, poor road condition, digging roads for public utilities like telephone cable, water supply, electricity, drainage and so on.
6. No provision for pedestrians on some roads. Besides, encroachments on pedestrian paths create traffic jam.

7. Erratic cattle and pets movement on the road.

8. Public and party meetings/functions/processions on the roadsides that affect the smooth flow of traffic.


d) Individual differences

Some people thrive on stressful situations, while others are overwhelmed by them. People’s ability differs in handling stress. According to Stephen P. Robbins\(^{17}\) the following six variables have been found to be relevant moderators. Those are perception, job experience, social support, belief in locus of control, self-efficacy, and hostility.

The employees react in response to their perception of reality rather than to reality itself. Therefore, perception moderates the relationship between a potential stress condition and an employee’s reaction.

The experience on the job tends to be negatively related to work stress. Employees who remain for a long time in an organization eventually develop coping mechanisms to deal with stress. Senior members of the organization are
more likely to be fully adapted and so experience less stress, because of rich work experience.

The social support is cordial relationships with coworkers or supervisors that can buffer the impact of stress. The social support acts as a palliative, mitigating the negative effects of even high-strain jobs. Chennai traffic police are getting more work stress because of increasing number of traffic rule violators. It gives them more tension in their work. Public support is very much needed for any kinds of social work. Many accidents happen because of violating traffic rules.

There are two types of violators; known and unknown violators. In Chennai city most of traffic violations are done by known violators. Traffic violations are increasing every year. Violating traffic rule not only gives extra work load but also de-motivates traffic police. The Chennai traffic police personnel’s involvement and performance get affected because of having poor image of traffic police among public and distorted information provided by print and broadcast media. According to Mr. Sunil Kumar IPS, Additional Commissioner of Police in Chennai traffic division in as statement published in Times of India newspaper most of the accidents took place in Chennai city because of traffic violation. The traffic violations are given below.

1. Over-speeding
2. Rash driving
3. Signal violation
4. Lane-jumping
5. Driving without license
6. Drunken-driving
7. Violating U-turns
8. Using cell-phones while driving
9. Riding without helmets

In the year 2007 traffic police registered 2,52,196 cases for traffic violation. They collected a fine of Rs. 3.8 crore in 2005, Rs. 4.6 crore in 2006 and Rs. 9.6 crore in 2007 from the traffic rule violators. It is observed from Table 3.1 that violators’ percentages are increasing continuously year by year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount of Fine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Rs.3.8crore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Rs.4.6crore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Rs.9.6crore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Times of India, 11 August, 2008, p.2

Internal locus of control is an indicator of positive care. People who think they are in control of their lives have a more positive self-view than those who think they are controlled by their environment. Internals handle their responsibility with less stress than the externals. When internals and externals confront a similar stressful situation, the internals are likely to believe that they
can have a significant effect on the results. Externals are more likely to be passive and feel helpless.

Self-efficacy has also been found to influence stress outcomes. Normally individuals with strong self-efficacy react less negatively to the strain created by long work hours and work overload than those who have low levels of self-efficacy. The internal locus of control and strong efficacy confirm the power of self-beliefs in moderating the effect of a high-strain situation.

4.4.2 CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

Stress shows itself in a number of ways. An individual who is experiencing a high level of stress may develop high blood pressure, ulcers, irritability, difficulty in making routine decisions, loss of appetite, accident-proneness, and so on. These can be subsumed under three general categories such as physiological, psychological, and behavioural symptoms.

a) Physiological symptoms

Most of the early concern with stress was directed at physiological symptoms. Stephen P. Robbins\(^{19}\) said that many research have been done in the health and medical sciences with respect to stress. This led to the conclusion that stress could create changes in metabolism, increase heart and breathing rates, increase blood pressure, bring on headaches, and induce heart attacks.
The link between stress and particular physiological symptoms is not clear. But recently, some evidence suggests that stress may have harmful physiological effects. The Hindu\textsuperscript{20} newspaper survey revealed that Chennai traffic police are getting more physiological problems due to their nature of work. Frequently they used to get eye problem because of dusty air and more strain because of long hours and continuous vigil, glare of powerful vehicles head light at night times and so on.

The Times of India\textsuperscript{21} newspaper has published information about Chennai city traffic police that they face diabetes threat. These statistics from several health camps show that the disease is high among the city police forces and at least one in every five policemen in the city could be suffering from the disease. While the prevalence of diabetes in Chennai is about 15 percent, it is estimated to be 20 percent in the police service. The Hindu\textsuperscript{22} newspaper published information that blood circulation is getting affected for Chennai traffic police personnel because of over work load.

b) Psychological symptoms

Stress can cause dissatisfaction in job and life. Job dissatisfaction is the simplest and most obvious psychological effect of stress. But stress shows itself in other psychological states such as tension, anxiety, irritability, boredom, and procrastination. Stephen P. Robbins\textsuperscript{23} says that the evidence indicates that when
people are placed in jobs that make multiple and conflicting demands or in which there is a lack of clarity about the incumbent’s duties, authority, and responsibilities, both stress and dissatisfaction are increased. Similarly, the less control people have over the pace of their work, the greater is stress and dissatisfaction. According to The Times of India newspaper survey the Chennai traffic police are facing more psychological problem because of overworkload, poor work environment, and insufficient manpower. Nearly 800 posts in the Chennai city traffic police have been lying vacant for the last one year. The following lack of facilities land to increase stress level of Chennai traffic police.

1. Lack of signal points at major junctions
2. Lack of power back up for signals at junctions
3. Lack of basic amenities like drinking water, toilet and so on
4. Insufficient number of traffic police persons at important places
5. Lack of modern communication system
6. Lack of basic equipments like night jacket, batons, mask, raincoat, bumboat, higher official influence, poor facilities and so on.

c) Behavioural symptoms

Behaviour-related stress symptoms include changes in productivity, absence and turnover, as well as changes in eating habits, increased smoking or consumption of alcohol, rapid speech, fidgeting, and sleep disorders. The low
and moderate levels of stress stimulate the body and increase ability to react. They are those who often perform their tasks better, more intensely, or more rapidly. But too much stress places unattainable demands on a person which result in lower performance. Even moderate levels of stress can have a negative influence on performance over the long term as the continued intensity of the stress wears down the individual and saps energy resources. Chennai traffic police performance decreased because of long work hours.

Some of the Chennai traffic police personnel because lackadaisical due to lack of facilities in work, narrow roads and poor road condition and so on. People and vehicle population increase day by day but road facilities have not yet improved. The traffic snarl\textsuperscript{25} make traffic police do overtime work. Encroachments\textsuperscript{26} on pedestrian areas and no pedestrian areas on some roads, create more traffic and make it difficult for traffic police to manage traffic.

\section*{4.5 STRATEGIES AND METHODS FOR MANAGING STRESS}

Stress is common to everyone. Stress is your reaction to any change that requires us to adjust or respond. It is important to remember that we can learn to control stress, because stress depends upon our manner of response to stressful events. Our bodies are designed to feel stress and react to it. It keeps us alert and ready to avoid danger. It is not always possible to avoid or change events that may cause stress. We can feel trapped and feel helpless to cope when stress
persists. The body begins to break down and illnesses can occur. The key to coping with stress is identifying stressors in life and learning ways to direct and reduce stress. According to Derek Rollinson\textsuperscript{27} coping strategies are classified into two types such as individual level strategies and organizational level strategies. It is briefly explained below.

A) Individual level strategies

Some persons naturally have more resistance power to cope with stress than others. The following methods help the individual to cope with stress that they experience.

1. Relaxation Techniques

One of the greatest problems for the person suffering from stress is that he or she finds it hard to relax. This technique can help in this respect and is likely to be beneficial. The person could force himself or herself to take a holiday or even be ordered to do so. In addition, there are a number of easily taught relaxation techniques that can be used such as breathing exercises, muscle relaxation and meditation. The meditation technique is more beneficial to physical and mental states.
2. **Physical Exercise**

Regular physical exercise such as jogging, walking and workout in fitness centres and are helpful. They not only improve blood circulation but also lower blood pressure, muscle tension and cholesterol levels. It has more subtle effects. The feeling of general well-being can help to combat some of the symptoms of stress when people are relaxed; they tend to sleep more soundly. It provides periods of intense relaxation and enables a person to marshal reserves of energy.

3. **Biofeedback**

This is a technique of learning to monitor one’s own bodily functioning such as taking pulse rate, check own breathing rate and so on, sometimes with the help of instruments. In biofeedback people are also taught elementary ways of controlling certain body functions, such as heart rate, muscle tension and blood pressure, which can help alleviate some of the symptoms of stress.

4. **Assertiveness Training**

This training method helps to learn to reappraise stressful situations and address root causes of problems. Assertiveness should not be confused with aggression. The assertive person is more likely to stand his or her ground and refuse to be trampled on, whereas aggression is more likely to be an attempt to trample on someone else. Helping someone to be more assertive is perhaps the
one technique that can encourage people to adopt a more problem-focused approach to stress, and this type is highly beneficial in the long term.

5. **Behavioural Self-control**

The aim here is usually to get people to analyse and take control of their own actions. In this case it is to identify ways in which their behaviour gives rise to stress. One technique is for people to learn how to manage their time more effectively and prioritise work tasks. Another is for people to learn to recognize situations that put them under stress and make plans for handling them so that the situations are less stressful.

6. **Social Support**

Social support is one of the best moderators of stress. It is used as a way of coping with stress by discussing stressful situations with colleagues, peers, family members and friends. The social support gives good beneficial effect to reduce stress. The beneficial effects of work-based support are much greater because the recipient feels that people can more readily appreciate the problems.

7. **Professional Help**

If all the above methods fail to help a person to come out of stress then the level of stress has gone beyond the point. It means he/she is in a dangerous
condition. It must be remembered that it is the severest form of stress. It can be so debilitating that people may be incapable of working out what to do to alleviate their symptoms. In this situation even the most devoted friends or family members fail to cure the stress and their well-intentioned interventions may actually do harm. The sensible thing to do is that of taking guidance from professional clinical experts. A wide variety of clinical techniques are available such as counselling, psychotherapy, behavioural therapies, hypnotherapy or insight-oriented approaches, virtual reality exposure therapy, electroconvulsive therapy, repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation, vogues’ nerve stimulation and so on. These clinical treatments give highly positive outcomes for those under severe stress. It tends to lower anxiety level and people come to view their job more positively.

B) Organizational level strategies

Organisational stressors affect large numbers of employees. It affects employees mentally as well as physically. If it is prolonged then it affects employees’ performance and growth of the organization. In order to avoid or reduce employees’ stress, the organisation should identify stress creating factors and take necessary steps to eradicate stress by way of changing the rules, regulations and organizational strategies.

1. Reducing tasks

2. Redesigning work environments
3. Using more flexible work schedules
4. Using more participative management styles
5. Involving employees in drawing up career development plans
6. Involving employees in establishing their work goals
7. Providing social support and feedback
8. Building cohesive teams
9. Establishing fair employment and rewards practices and so on.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Work stress arises from an interaction between people and their work milieu. Stress is an individually experienced phenomenon and it is unlikely that two persons will react to the same set of stressors in exactly the same way because of different perception and experience among the people. Low level of stress is beneficial to human being to improve their functioning. Individuals and organizations need to explore ways of reducing the potential for stressful condition and to find ways of helping people to cope with stress. People can either equip themselves with a number of coping techniques that enable them to withstand the effects of stressful conditions or they can attempt to change the characteristics of the situation in which they find themselves. However, organizations are ultimately responsible for developing solutions, perhaps by using redesigning initiatives to make the work milieu a less stressful place.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid, p. 3

3. Ibid, pp. 3 - 4

4. Ibid, p. 3

5. Ibid, p. 4


8. Ibid,


