CHAPTER-III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Stress is a major problem in today’s society. Stress is the problem of everyone. Everybody works in pain and is suffering due to high pressure, intense work environment and changing and challenging demands. Occupational stress causes an increase in cost which is the result of absenteeism, staff turnover, accidents and corporate scams. Stress products enormous symptoms which vary according to individuals, situations and severity of demand, which includes physical health decline and a conduction of depression. The problems of stress have become a major importance to both the employers and employees. Stress involves the circumstances and experiences that are perceived as threatening to the individuals. Major types of stress include frustration, depression, conflict change and pressure, which produce physiological and psychological stress.

Thus stress is an inevitable element in the fabric of modern life\textsuperscript{10}. Stress is characteristically defined by the behavioral paradigm in terms of stimulus-response connections. Stress can be described as the stimulus or force that, if sufficiently strong, can cause tension in the individual who experiences it. Stress is likely to create problems within the organization, which will have the direct or indirect effect on the bottom line. The operating costs certainly rise because of lower productivity, incorrect or random work and mistakes.

**DEFINITION OF STRESS**

Stress is a term used to designate a wide range of man’s states arising in response to various extreme effects (stress factors). Stress is defined as any circumstance that threatens or is perceived to threaten one’s well-being and that they tax one’s coping abilities.

Stress in the work place is common throughout the world in every business. Managing stress becomes essential in order to keep up job performance as well as relationship with co-workers and employers. Changing the work environment and making the environment less competitive between employees decreases stress. Cultural differences also have some major effects on stress coping problems.

According to Unites States National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (1999), Job stress can be defined as “the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources (or) needs of the workers. Job stress can lead to poor health and even injury.”

Beer and Newman 1978 define as job stress as “a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning.”

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13 www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/99-101/
3.2 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term “stress” was first used by the endocrinologist Hans Selye in the 1930s to identify physiological responses in laboratory animals. He later broadened and popularized the concept which included the perceptions and responses of humans trying to adapt to the challenges of everyday life. In Selye’s terminology, “stress” refers to the reaction of the organism, and “stressor” to the perceived threat.

Stress may be experienced positively or negatively. Eustress, can be considered as an adaptive response prompting the activation of internal resources to meet challenges and achieve the goals.

The term stress is commonly used by laypersons for any perceived difficulties in life. It also became a euphemism, a way of referring to problems and eliciting sympathy from others without being explicitly confessional. It covers a wide range of phenomena from mild irritation to severe problems that might result in severe breakdown of health. In general any event or situation between these extremes could be described as stressful.

Signs of stress may be cognitive, emotional, physical or behavioral. It includes symptoms such as poor judgments, a general negative outlook, excessive worrying, moodiness, irritability, agitation, inability to relax, feeling overwhelmed, feeling lonely or isolated, depressed, aches and pains, diarrhea or constipation, nausea, dizziness, chest pain, rapid heartbeat, eating too much or not enough, sleeping too much or not enough, withdrawing from others, procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities, using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax and nervous habits like nail biting and pacing.
3.3 TYPES OF STRESS

Stress is the body’s way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be caused by both good and bad situations and experiences. When an individual is stressed, his body reacts by releasing chemicals in the blood. These chemicals give more energy and strength, when the stress is caused by physical danger. But it becomes bad when the stress is caused by emotional imbalance as there is no outlet for the extra energy and strength. Such reactions cause different types of stress.

3.3.1 Acute stress

Acute stress is the most common form of stress among human beings. Acute stress deals with the pressure of the near future or dealing with the very recent past. This type of stress is often misinterpreted as a negative connotation. But in certain circumstances, it is a good thing to have some acute stress in life. Running or any other form of exercise is considered an acute stressor. Some exciting or exhilarating experiences is an acute stress is usually very fun. Acute stress is a short term stress which has long term causes.

3.3.2 Chronic Stress

Chronic stress is just the opposite of acute stress. It has an enormous effect on people which become a very serious health risk if it continues over a long period of time. Chronic stress leads to memory loss, damage special recognition and produces decreased desire for eating. The severity varies from person to person and gender difference can also be an underlying factor. Women are able to take longer durations of stress than men without showing the same maladaptive changes. Men can deal with shorter stress duration better than women. Beyond a particular limit, the chances for them to develop mental issues increase drastically.
3.3.3 Emotional Stress

When undergoing emotional stress, the hormones get out of balance. Cortisol levels go up and DHEA levels go down the coping hormones get depressed and the pleasure hormones don’t get released.

3.3.4 Sleep Deprivation–Induced Stress

Sleep is a natural medicine, pure and simple. But without adequate levels of restorative sleep, our body release cortisol, which sets up a stress cycle and causes a disruption in the sleep we do get.

3.3.5 Dietary Stress

An unbalanced diet causes stress in the body. So does eating too little or too much, which can disrupt the digestive system and hinder the body’s ability to recover from physical exertion or even a day of overwork at the workplace?

3.3.6 Physical Stress

This kind of stress typically occurs from exerting too much in a workout, but it also affects those who have the type of job that demands a lot physically, such as a construction work.

3.3.7 Chemical Stress

Chemical stress occurs when the body has to get rid of compounds that are harmful or toxic to it. Most such toxins come from the external environment–everything from the air that is breathed, the water and food intaken, the home and office inhabited.

3.3.8 Inflammation-Induced Stress

Inflammation is a side effect of stress, but it also serves as a promoter of stress on the body. Inflammation comes from a number of things, including
working out too hard, eating a poor diet, being overweight, and not getting enough omega 3 in the diet.

3.3.9 Time and Anticipatory stress

Time stress is experienced when there is little or no time to meet the personal obligations or work deadlines. Anticipatory stress is concerning the future. It can also be vague and undefined, like a overall sense of dread or worry about the future that something will go wrong.

3.3.10 Situational and Encounter stress

Situational stress is experienced when there is no control over the situation. It includes situations involving conflict, or a loss of status or acceptance.

Encounter stress is the most common type of stress which is encountered by the physicians and social workers. It occurs when the role of an individual involves a lot of personal interactions with those groups in distress.

3.4 CAUSES OF STRESS

The stress is a serious health issue which is detriment to an individual’s mental and physical well-being. There are many number of situations or conditions in which people feel stress. Stress is the body’s way of responding to any kind of demand. It is caused by both good and bad experiences.

The conditions which cause stress are called stressors. A stressor leads the body to have a physiological reaction which can strain a person physically as well as mentally. A variety of factors contribute to occupational stress such as negative workload, isolation, extensive hours worked, toxic work environments, lack of autonomy, difficult relationships among co workers and management, management bullying, harassment and lack of opportunities or
motivation to advancement in one’s skill level. Workplace stress arises when there is an imbalance is the demands and pressures of the work environment and an individual is unable to cope. If an employee fits well in the workplace, the chances for stress are minimum. Stress produces numerous symptoms which vary according to persons, situation and severity. This leads to physical health decline and depression.

The various factors that cause stress can be grouped under:

(i) Personal Factors
(ii) Organisational Factors

3.4.1 Personal Factors

Personal factors refer to the factors which affect an individual. The personal factors like ability, perception manner of approaching crisis, level of self-confidence, experience, desire for work, attitudes and beliefs, the level of social acceptance and supportive environment and personalized individual differences cause stress.

**Personal Factors**

**The Environment**

Person

Stressor(s)

Result

- Ability
- Perception
- Manner of Approaching Crisis
- Level of Self-confidence
- Experience
- Desire for work
- Beliefs
- Social Acceptance & Support
- Personalized Individual Differences

Stress
3.4.1.1 Ability

The mental and physical capacity of a person to face critical situations in life is one of the important personal factors causing stress. Some people are capable of facing any type of critical situations. They have the necessary mental and physical stamina to overcome any kind of pressure or crisis. On the other hand, there are people who do not have the capability to face or withstand critical situations. It is only these people who develop the condition of stress and inturn turnout to be poor job performers.

3.4.1.2 Perception

Perception is a psychological process by which a person or employee selects perceives and organizes environmental information into concept of reality. Employee perceptions of a situation influence the level of stress.

3.4.1.3 Manner of Approaching Crisis

How a person approaches a situation when there is a crisis is yet another cause of stress. Some people perform well when there is a critical situation. They make it a challenge to succeed by their brilliant performance. But, some people become nervous and as a result they are unable to perform well.

3.4.1.4 Level of Self-confidence

Some people basically lack self-confidence. In a crisis, for such people the level of self-confidence deteriorates further and affects performance. They lose the stamina to perform well. People who have supreme self-confidence do not undergo stress.

3.4.1.5 Experience

A person may perceive a situation as more or less stressful, depending on how familiar that person is with the situation and prior experience with the
particular stressors involved. Prior experience or training allow some employees in an organization to deal calmly and competently with stressors rather than less experienced or inadequately trained employees. The relationship between experience and stress is based on reinforcement. Positive reinforcement or previous success in a similar situation reduces the level of stress that a person experiences under certain circumstances whereas, punishment or past failure under similar conditions can increase stress under the same circumstances.

3.4.1.6 Desire for Work

The desire of an employee for work is yet another important personal factor. An employee with a desire for work is always keen in performing his work and only completion of the work will give him mental peace and happiness. He finds his work as a pleasurable activity and does not develop stress conditions. It is only those employees who find their work as a burden is more prone to stress conditions.

3.4.1.7 Beliefs

An employee who strongly believes that systematic work will pay rich benefits does not feel the work pressure and therefore is not likely to experience stress. On the other hand, an employee who does not believe and do a systematic work may have to strain much towards the end as a result may undergo stress due to work pressure.

3.4.1.8 Social Acceptance and Support

The presence or absence of other people like colleagues, friends and superiors, can have influence on the way an individual experiences stress at workplace and reacts or responds to the stressors.
3.4.1.9 Personalized Individual Differences

Individual differences in motivation, attitudes, personality, and abilities also influence. People are different. What one person considers a major source of stress, another may feel it convenient. Personality characteristics, in particular, explain some of the differences in the ways that employees, experience and respond to stressful conditions.

3.4.2 Organizational Factors

The nature of the job performed by the individual often cause stress. If a job is too routine, dull, and boring, or there are frequent transfers which limits the time that can be spent together with family, the individual experiences stress. Some jobs are hazardous or morally conflicting to the individual who faces it. There are many stressors at the work place which cause stress for the employees. They are known as work stressors.

Work Stressors

- Workload and Time pressure
- Job Conditions and Hours of work
- Role Conflict & Ambiguity
- Career Planning and Development
- Workplace Violence and Sexual Harassment
- Interpersonal Relations

- Perception
- Past Experience
- Social Support
- Individual Difference

Stress
3.4.2.1 Workload and Time Pressure

When there is too much work to do and not enough time or resources to do it can be stressful. Role overload arises when demands exceed the capacity of a person to meet all of them adequately. Role overload or a condition to work too hard is the major source of stress for many jobs. The target to be attained is always within a time frame. As the deadline for the task completion approaches, the work pressure increases. If the employee is unable to cope-up with the work pressure it leads to physical or mental stress.

3.4.2.2 Job Conditions

Poor job conditions represent another important set of job stressors. Extreme temperature high or low density of, loud noise, lighting, radiation and air pollution are few examples of working conditions that can cause stress in employees. When these environmental stressors are present the job performance of the employees deteriorates. Which lead to serious consequences. Moreover, their effects are cumulative. When the working hours, of employees are too long without interval or rest period they become tired both physically and mentally. If this continues the employees are prone to stress.

3.4.2.3 Role Conflict and Ambiguity

Differing expectations or demands on a person at the workplace cause role conflict. Role ambiguity occurs when an employee is uncertain and vague about assigned job duties and responsibilities. Role conflict and role ambiguity are significant sources of job related stress. Having responsibilities for the behavior of others and lack of opportunity to participate in decision making are other aspects of employees roles that are stressful.
3.4.2.4 Biased Assessment of Performance

Performance appraised is an important aspect of the career development of an employee. When the assessment is good, it motivates an employee. When the assessment is partial, it leads to stress.

3.4.2.5 Career Planning and Development

The past liberalization era had lead many business organizations for reorganization and downsizing to keep in line with the industry demands. Such restructuring of jobs, work teams, departments or entire organizations have many career related (especially career planning and development) concerns of employees. Hence the employees find these concerns stressful.

3.4.2.6 Interpersonal Relations

Groups and teams in the Organization have a major impact on the behavior of people. Good working relationships and interactions with peers, subordinates, and superiors are vital aspects of organizational life, helping people to achieve their personal and organizational goals. When relationships are poor and unhealthy, they become sources of stress.

3.4.2.7 Work place Violence and Sexual Harassment

Aggressive behavior which causes physical or psychological harm to an employee is work place violence. Extreme cases mostly end with physical combat resulting in assaulting suicides, ignorance of safety rules and accidental deaths. Such displays of work place violence not only result in low productivity but serve as a major source of work stress for the employees. Sexual harassment is the unwanted contact or immoral- communication of a sexual nature.
3.5 CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

The problem due to high levels of stress can be summed up in to three general categories, viz.:

- **Physiological**
- **Psychological**
- **Behavioral**

### 3.5.1 Physiological Problems

A high level of stress is generally by high blood pressure heart diseases and Ulcers. There may be even a link between stress and cancer. Such serious physical ailments always have an adverse effect on the individual. Physical problems such as heart disease headache, hypertension lack of appetite, sleeplessness, indigestion occur due to stress.

### 3.5.2 Psychological Problems

Stress causes dissatisfaction. Job-related stress causes job-related dissatisfaction. Job dissatisfaction is the simplest and most obvious psychological effect of stress. But stress shows itself in other psychological states anger anxiety depression, nervousness, irritability, tension, boredom, chronic worry and frustration.

When people are placed in jobs that involve multiple and conflicting demands or in which there is lack of clarity in duties, authority and responsibilities, both stress and dissatisfaction are increased. Moreover, jobs that provide a low level of participation, variety, significance, autonomy, feedback, and identity to employees create stress and reduce satisfaction and involvement in the job.
3.5.3 Behavioral Problems

Behavioral analyses are help in analyzing the effects of job stress. Behaviorally related stress symptoms of stress include changes in productivity, absence, and turn over, excessive smoking, abuse of alcohol or drugs, tendency to neglect safety precautions and tendency to pick up quarrels frequently with superiors subordinates and fellow workers.

These behavioral problems lead to severe consequences in the organization. It includes low productivity, low output, low quality, loss of resources, excessive complaints, conflicts and grievances, absenteeism, labour turnover and poor interpersonal relationships.

3.6 STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Stress in an unavoidable feature of life and work. Stress hits all in personal as well as work life. A little stress is good as it keeps a person motivated and focused. But too much of stress is detrimental and it must be coped up. Stress can be managed by identifying the sources, and recognizing the reactions to stress and job demands The term coping is used in reference to perpetual, cognitive or behavioural responses that are used in managing, avoiding or controlling situations that could be regarded as difficult (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Coping refers to the different methods used by a person to manage his/her stressful situation

Carver et.al. (1989) describe five varieties of problem-focused coping:

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1. **Active coping** - This consists of the process of taking steps towards the removal or alleviation of stressor and its effects.

2. **Planning** - This refers to thinking about how to cope with the stressor.

3. **Suppression of competing activities** - This means putting other project on the background, and trying to avoid becoming distracted by other events in order to deal with the stressor.

4. **Restraint coping** - This involves waiting until the right opportunity to solve a problem and avoiding acting prematurely.

5. **Seeking social support for instrumental reasons** - This deals with looking for advice, help or information.

### 3.6.1 Coping options

Various coping options are available to the individual dealing with stressful events and circumstances. The different coping categories are:

**a. Adaptive and Maladaptive coping:** Coping is adaptive, when it helps the individual to deal effectively with stressful events and minimize distress. Coping is maladaptive, when it results in unnecessary distress for the self or others.

**b. Emotion and Problem-solving focus:** In the case of emotion-focused coping, the focus is dealing with own fear, anger or guilt. In the case of problem-focused coping, the focus is attempting to deal with the stressor or circumstance itself.

**c. Five Coping Strategies:** Cohen and Lazarus (1979) have proposed five optional strategies confronting stress. They are Information-seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, intra psychological efforts, and turning to others.
d. **The COPE Scale**: The cope scale was developed to measure a range of ways in which people handle stressful events and situations. They are active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint coping, seeking social support for instrumental reason, seeking social support for emotional reasons, positive reinterpretation and growth, acceptance, turning to religion, focus on and venting emotion, denial, mental disengagement, alcohol and or other drugs.

e. **Transformational and Regressive Coping**: Hardiness is likely to lead to transformational coping-taking construction action to change the stressor. This coping option emerges from a sense of commitment. Fundamentally, it is based on optimism. Regressive coping is thinking pessimistically and avoiding the stressor.

f. **Schafer Coping model**: The Schafer coping model consists of three A’s of coping methods. They are.

1. **After the stressor**
   
   Whether stressor is controllable to certain extent or positively changeable or influenceable has to be analyzed. This includes changing a situation, spacing the life changes in a better way, increasing the challenges to be met in life, better time management and asking someone to change the behavior.

2. **Adapting to the stressor**

   The ways to adapt to the stressor or prevent or lower the stress level includes the control of physical stress, maintaining health status by regular exercise and diet, using the coping resources to the maximum and avoiding negative methods to lower stress.
3. Avoid the stressor

The stressor can be avoided. It is better to avoid stress by careful planning and execution of things rather than managing it.

* Seeking to change a specific situation.
* Changing a physical stressor
* Pacing stressor better
* Spacing the life changes better.
* Increasing challenges in life
* Organizing time better.
* Asking someone to alter behavior.

3.7 TYPES OF COPING STRATEGIES

Some stress is necessary for the optimum efficiency of an individual. Since higher stress is destructive for a person as well as workplace well-being, it is necessary for individual, as well as management to take steps combat and reduce stress to acceptable levels.

3.7.1 Individual strategies

Physical and psychological well-being of the person is essential to reduce or eliminate the negative effects of stress. It is possible to manage stress, when a person either avoids stressful conditions, change them or learn to cope with them. There are number of way by which stress can be managed so that a person can have control over his life. The following strategies deal with the individual and focus on improving his physical and mental strength to deal with stress from all sources.

3.7.1.1 Readjust life goals: Because of the severe competition to lead most individuals set very high standards and goals for themselves, which make them to try too much in too little time. The tremendous fear of failing,
high expectations and limited resources to reach such expectations result in stress. Hence individuals must readjust their goals and make sure they have the ability and proper resources.

**3.7.1.2 Physiological fitness:** Individuals who exercise regularly and strengthen their endurance suffer less from certain types of stress-related illnesses. As physical fitness is required for stress resistance, many organizations have added facilities for physical exercise in their premises. Proper exercise, diet control and non-smoking habits decrease blood pressure and cholesterol level and the body becomes more resistant to pressures consequently, the stress also decreases. People get physically weak or emotionally depressed if they are overweight or poorly nourished.

**3.7.1.3 Meditation:** Meditation is concentration of mind which takes away from stress producing areas. Sitting in a comfortable position, closing the eyes and clearing the mind from all disturbing thoughts is considered as meditation. Basically, meditation involves silently repeating a single word or mantra over and over again. This concentration on mantra shuts out other distraction and results in physical and mental relaxation to a great extent. The place of meditation should not be disturbed by any outside force such as telephone, children or other individuals. This popularized technique is known as “Transcendental Meditation” or TM.

**3.7.1.4 Biofeedback:** Biofeedback is a method which is designed to alter undesirable physiological stress reactions through psychological strategies. Electronic instruments are used in Biofeedback to measure small undesirable changes caused by stress. Then a state of relaxation is incorporated in order to bring back the bodily functions to normal non-stress state.
3.7.1.5 **Planful Problem Solving:** Planful problem solving is a significant method of a solution in the most logical way. This is a coping technique where the person encountering steers defines out a definite plan of action and follows it promptly. Planful Problem Solving refers to cognitive appraisal which involves objective assessment and logical thinking.

3.7.1.6 **Seeking social support:** When an individual copes with a stressful situation by gaining resources from interpersonal relationship, then it is called coping through seeking social support. Coping through seeking social support is the, request for a concrete support in problem solving or finding an emotional anchorage in other to quit from the shock or share and lighten one’s feelings.

3.7.1.7 **Distancing:** Distancing refers to the coping strategy where one tries to make light of the situation, by just carrying on with the work as if nothing had happened.

3.7.1.8 **Self control:** When an individual experiences severe stress in a problematic situation but keeps everything close to their heart, without expressing it he/she is coping through self control. This solution to the problem is evolved unilaterally when the person under stress is solely responsible for the cause of stress.

3.7.1.9 **Escape avoidance:** Coping through Escape Avoidance refers to a situation when the individual moves away from a situation to a fantasy or other similar modes. The stressed person’s attention is consciously diverted from problems to relaxation. This strategy does not solve the problem, but it seeks to find a temporary escape from the hardiness of the situations.
3.7.10 Stretching Exercise: By stretching various muscles, the points of tension and tightness are released. The muscles get relaxed which were previously tight due to stressful conditions.

3.7.11 Aerobic Exercises: Aerobic exercises involve rapid movements of body which help in releasing the bound up energy in tight muscles. By utilizing this energy for movement it provides relaxation to body and mind. An aerobic exercise also stimulates release of endorphins which are body’s natural Pain-Killers and thus gives a pleasant feeling to mind.

3.7.12 Massage: In massage therapy is the strategy whereby. The gradual pressing and releasing the muscles leads to losing their tightness. The tension vanishes and it leads to physical relaxation. By gliding the hands on the body gently in the form of long and short strokes, the tired energized.

3.7.13 Acupressure: In acupressure therapy also called ‘Para’ involves the, pressing of various points in the body located in hands, feet, face and spine. Energy in the body is balanced and all imbalances in bodily functions including tightness of muscles are removed to a grater extent leading to relaxation.

3.7.14 Spa: Water acts as a great relaxant for a tired stressed and tensed body and mind. Relaxation is obtained by a simple hot or cold water bath. The great relaxation property hidden in water hot water is that it, relaxes the muscles while cold water invigorates releases and soothes the tired nerves. The lightness of the body felt during floating in a swimming pool or Lake Pond also lightens the mind. Other nature cure methods like fresh air bath sunbath and mud bath also give relaxation to the people.

3.7.15 Yog nidra: In yog nidra, people rotate the consciousness or mind through various body parts. Wherever consciousness is directed more
prana flows to that part of the body and removes the imbalances. Hence by simply directing the attention or mind inwardly (eyes closed) on various body parts, a stressed person can relax body.

**3.7.1.16 Abdominal breathing:** Breathing has a very deep and subtle relationship with the state of body and mind. If the body and mind are tensed, breathing will be rapid, shallower, jerky, non-rhythmical. Simultaneously, when the body and mind are relaxed, breathing will be slow, deep, rhythmical and diaphragmatic. By effectively restoring the breathing to a pattern of relaxed state and also by special breathing exercise called pranayama techniques, the imbalances in body and mind can be eliminated thereby achieving relaxation.

**3.7.1.17 Laughter:** A good laughter thoroughly relaxes the brain and facial muscles. It also relaxes other muscles of the body as the whole body vibrates in a good laughter. Wrong habits of eating at lesser intervals, eating the wrong combination of food at wrong time have a subtle influence in creating imbalance in the body which results in stress. In fact various techniques described earlier like massage, acupressure, exercises, breathing all help in effect disposal of toxins from the body.

**3.7.1.18 Music and nature:** Music has a great power in soothing a tired worried and tensed mind. A distracted mind easily gets attested to pleasant music and songs. Now a days ‘music therapy’ has emerged as separate branch of therapy in medical field wherein different types of music are tried for curing different physical and psychological disorders. Classical music, melodious songs, devotional music and Bhajans are generally soothing for a restless and disturbed mind. Stress is also reduced when going close to nature like gardens, forests, maintains, rivers, lake, seeing open sky and inhaling fresh air.
3.7.2 Organization Strategies For Coping With Stress

While it is necessary for individuals to design their own strategies to reduce stress to an acceptable level, it is equally important for organizations to develop programs that will help employees reduce their stress. This will help in controlling employee turnover, absenteeism, and as a result, productivity will improve. Some of the steps that organizations can take are:

3.7.2.1 Health maintenance: Many organizations provide facilities at their premises for physical fitness such as gym, swimming pools, as well as psychological counseling. They hold seminars, workshops and lectures to help employees in understanding the nature and sources of stress, its ramifications and possible ways to reduce its negative effects. Most programmes involve one or more of the following techniques: biofeedback, meditation, muscular relaxation exercises, and skill training areas such as time management, interpersonal skills, training to think positively about life and its problems and looking at sources of stress realistically and analytically.

3.7.2.2 Selection and placement: The basic hiring process should be based upon matching of skills, personality and work requirements. Being placed in a job that is not compatible with ability and temperament, can be highly frustrating and stress producing. The applicants should be hired not only on the basis of educational background and past relative experience but the criteria for selection could also include the applicant’s ability to handle role ambiguity and role conflict when present.

3.7.2.3 Job enrichment: Redesigning the job should be in such a manner as to use the maximum potential of the employee with emphasis on employee involvement in such redesigning. This will help reduce stress caused by monotony, routine work, role ambiguity, work overload or underload. Job enrichment enhances motivation and leads to more challenging
assignment, improved task significance, more responsibility, more meaningful work and more control of the employee over his own work environment.

3.7.2.4 Effective and equitable performance appraisal and reward system: It is necessary that performance be appraised in an objective and non-biased manner and the rewards be clearly and proportionately related to performance. The employee must know what is expected of him and for what exactly he is responsible and accountable. This will reduce role conflict. Employees contribution to the organization must be well recognised, appreciated and rewarded. This will instill enthusiasm and a sense of dedication and belonging which in itself is a stress fighting phenomenon.

3.7.2.5 Participation in decision making: It the employees are invited to participate in making decisions involving their own work setting, within the organizational guidelines, this would make the employees that they are their own boss, a factor that is associated with less negative reactions to stress. Participation increases job involvement and reduces ambiguity and conflict – the two stress producing agents. This would also result in closer cooperation among superiors and subordinates and a better work environment, especially when the superiors support their subordinates.

3.7.2.6 Building teamwork: The management must create a work environment in which the members of the work group consider themselves as members of the same family. There should be no provision for interpersonal conflict within the group nor for conflict between an individual and the group. Such conflict is causes of stress and should be prevented from building or eliminated if they develop.
3.7 CONCLUSION

The distress resulting from mismanaged stress may be manifested by physiological, psychological and behavioural problems for the individuals. When health is taken as complete physical, mental and social well-being, reducing or managing stress aids in financing the benefits of dealing the stress successfully. The study of stress is important for both the individuals and organizations because of its deterrent effects. Accelerated on and off-the-job stresses and expectations adversely affect the entire growth of both the individual as well as the organizations. Hence, a satisfying work environment and a healthy personal life are very important.