CHAPTER 2

FACTORS AFFECTING STRESS

➢ Understanding Importance of Optimum Stress Levels

➢ Job satisfaction and its Impact on Stress

➢ Causes of stress at workplace; home

➢ Burnout Stage
CHAPTER 2

FACTORS AFFECTING STRESS

> INTRODUCTION

While researchers recognized the presence of stress decades earlier and had specifically linked it to disease several years earlier, it was not until early in the 1950s that anyone was able to identify a list of specific events that contributed to stress. During the early 1950s, University of Washington psychiatrist Thomas Holmes noted that tuberculosis had occurred among patients after a cluster of disruptive events, such as a death in the family, a new job, or a marriage. Based partly on that observation and partly on his extensive research, Holmes pronounced that the single common denominator for stress is "... significant change in the life pattern of an individual." Holmes emphasized that stress did not cause the tuberculosis - tuberculosis bacteria had to be present - but that stress somehow weakened the body or made it more vulnerable to the disease. Branching out in his research, Holmes began to search for specific links between disease and what he called life events, those things in life that call for the greatest adjustment. He found that the more life events a person was subjected to within a brief period of time, the more likely he or she was to become ill.

2.1
UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF OPTIMUM STRESS LEVELS

The level of stress under which you operate is important: if you are not under enough stress, then you may find that your performance suffers because you are bored and unmotivated. If you are under too much stress, then you will find that your results suffer as stress related problems interfere with your performance.

There is a linkage between stress and performance. Following are some tips on how you can ensure that you perform at your best by optimizing stress levels.

The approach to optimizing stress depends on the sort of stress being experienced:

- Short term stress such as difficult meetings, sporting or other performances, or confrontational situations. Here the emphasis is on short term management of adrenaline to maximize performance.

- Long term stress, where fatigue and high adrenaline levels over a long period can lead to degraded performances. Here optimizing stress concentrates on management of fatigue, health, energy and morale. Naturally there is some element of overlap between these.
Short term stress

The graph below shows the relationship between stress and the quality of performance when you are in situations that impose short term stress:

![Graph showing the relationship between stress and performance](image)

GR- 2.1

(Please note that this graph will be a slightly different shape for different people in different circumstances)

Where stress is low, you may find that your performance is low because you become bored, lack concentration and motivation.

Where stress is too high, your performance can suffer from all the symptoms of short-term stress viz; fuming, sweating, acidity, palpitation, breathing problem, thirsty ness, restlessness etc
In the middle, at a moderate level of stress, there is a zone of best performance. If you can keep yourself within this zone, then you will be sufficiently aroused to perform well while not being over-stressed and unhappy.

This graph and this zone of optimum performance are different shapes for different people. Some people may operate most effectively at a level of stress that would leave other people either bored or in pieces. It is possible that someone who functions superbly at a low level might experience difficulties at a high level of stress. Alternatively someone who performs only moderately at low level might perform exceptionally under extreme pressure.
Long term stress

The problems of long term, sustained stress are more associated with fatigue, morale, and health than with short term adrenaline management.

The graph below shows the way in which performance can suffer when you are under excessive long term stress:

The graph shows four major stages that you may go through in response to sustained levels of excessive stress:

1. During the first phase you will face challenges with plenty of energy. Your response will probably be positive and effective.
2. After a period of time you may begin to feel seriously tired. You may start to feel anxious, frustrated and upset. The quality of your work may begin to suffer.

3. As high stress continues you may begin to feel a sense of failure and may be ill more frequently. You may also begin to feel exploited by your organization. At this stage you may start to distance yourself from your employer, perhaps starting to look for a new job.

4. If high levels of stress continue without relief you may ultimately experience depression, burnout, nervous breakdown, or some other form of serious stress related illness.

Different people may move between these stages with different speeds under different stress conditions.

At a simple level it may appear that a measure of 'toughness' is how well you keep on going under extreme stress. This is simplistic. It is certainly possible to be self-indulgent and use stress as an excuse for not pushing yourself hard enough. It is, however, also far too easy to let yourself be pushed to a level where your work, and physical and mental health start to suffer. The strongest and most flexible position is to actively manage your levels of stress and fatigue so that you are able to produce high quality work over a long period, reliably.
High performance in your job may require continued hard work in the face of high levels of sustained stress. If this is the case, it is essential that you learn to pay attention to your feelings. This ensures that you know when to relax, slacken off for a short period, get more sleep, or implement stress management strategies. If you do not take feelings of tiredness, upset or discontent seriously, then you may face failure, burn-out or breakdown.

As well as paying attention to your own stress levels, it may be worth paying attention to the stress under which people around you operate. If you are a manager seeking to improve productivity, then failing to monitor stress may mean that you drive employees into depression or burn-out. If this is a danger, then reduce stress for long enough for them to recover, and then reconsider the pace you are setting.
JOB SATISFACTION AND ITS IMPACT ON STRESS

A major part of man's life is spent in work which is a social reality and to which man seem to conform. Even then only economic motive has never satisfied men. It is always of greater interest to know why men work and at which level and how he/she satisfied with the job.

Hoppock noted that job satisfaction depends upon the extent to which the job, we hold meets the needs that we feel it should meet. The degree of satisfaction is determined by the ratio between what we have and what we want. By law of nature as we have more, we want more; hence the level of satisfaction remains less.

Job satisfaction is dynamic, as it can go as quickly as it comes. It is a positive emotional state that occurs when a person's job seems to fulfill important values, provided these values are compatible with one's needs. Job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experience. In short job satisfaction is a synchronization of what an organisation requires of its employees and what the employees are seeking of the organisation.
EXAMINING DETERMINANTS OF JOB SATISFACTION:

Job satisfaction is derived from and is caused by many inter-related factors. Although these factors can never be completely isolated from one another for analysis, they can by the use of statistical techniques, be separated enough to give an indication of their relative importance to job satisfaction.

A) PERSONAL FACTORS

1) Sex:
Most investigations on the subject have found that women are more satisfied with their jobs than men are. This is so despite the fact that women are generally discriminated against in job competition and pay, quite possibly the reason is that women's ambitions and financial needs are less.

2) Number of Dependents:
The more dependence one has, the less satisfaction he has with his job. Perhaps the stress of greater financial need brings about greater dissatisfaction with one's job. The difference in satisfaction among employees with different number of dependents is however small.

3) Age:
Studies have found different results in different groups on the relationship of age to job satisfaction. There was higher intrinsic job satisfaction among older employees, but lower financial and job status satisfaction among this group. However, different studies reveal different impact of age related with job satisfaction.
4) Time on Job:
Several investigations have indicated that job satisfaction is relatively high at the start, drops slowly to the fifth or eighth year, and then rises again with more time on job.

5) Education:
There is a great deal of conflicting evidence on the relationship between education and job satisfaction, different studies have indicated different amount of impact of education on job satisfaction.

B) FACTORS INHERENT IN THE JOB

1) Type of work:
The most important factors inherent in the job are type of work. Several studies have shown that varied work brings about more job satisfaction than does routine work. Job satisfaction varies almost from 0 to 100 percent, depending on the job.

2) Skill required:
Skill in relation to job satisfaction has a bearing on several other factors, kind of work, responsibility and others. A study of the relation of skill to job satisfaction concluded that “Where skill exist to a considerable degree, it tends to become the first source of satisfaction to the workman, satisfaction in condition of work or in wages becomes predominant only where satisfaction on skill has materially decreased”.

2.10
3) Occupation status:
Occupation status is related to, but not identical with job satisfaction. Occupational status is always valued in terms of others opinion. It has been seen that employees who are working at the lower position seems to look for other job. Where they can have greater job satisfaction. It has been seen that employees are more dissatisfied in jobs that have less social status and prestige. These values are rather constant within a country, but they do vary among some countries and they probably vary from time to time within a country under some conditions.

4) Size of organisation:
In a small organisation, employees get a greater chance to interact with other employees and can seek co-operation of others very easily. While in a large organization this can be possible but depending upon requirement of the organisation and the task, which it has assigned to the employees.

C) FACTORS CONTROLLED BY MANAGEMENT

1) Security:
An average employee will think of job security first rather than other factors to get settled in life. It has been seen that employees secured in job are more satisfied in their job.
But security is of less importance to the better educated person, perhaps because there is not so much fear of layoff in the kind of jobs that the highly educated obtain, or the highly educated are justifiably more confident of being able to find other jobs if necessary.

2) Pay:
The importance of pay as a factor in job satisfaction has been greatly over emphasized by management. Most studies have found that pay ranks well below security, type of work etc. The relative importance of pay will probably change with the labour market, economic conditions and with employees' beliefs about the job situation.

3) Opportunity for advancement:
In today's time this factor is of greater importance. Young ones are more interested in advancing because it is possible only in his earlier years. Belief that individual merit is rewarded would appear to be closely related to belief that there is chance to advance even where a person does not believe that he deserves a promotion it is still highly important to him that the best man be prompted.

4) Working conditions:
Working conditions rank variously from second to ninth in importance, there seems to be a tendency for working conditions to be ranked lower, perhaps because they have been improved.
5) **Co-workers:**

One's association has frequently been mentioned as a factor in job satisfaction. Certainly this seems reasonable as people want to be near their friends.

6) **Supervision:**

Good supervision ranks about average in importance of the first ten things people want in a job. To the worker his supervisor is the company; hence worker's feelings towards his supervisor are usually similar to his feelings towards the company. Supervision is without question, one of the most important factors related to job satisfaction, which is correlated with factors that also are important are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Ranking of factors given by employees</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Time on Job</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) Social Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) Education</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 2.1
CAUSES OF STRESS AT WORK: HOME

1. Hassles Of Daily Life:
   While certain events, such as the death of a close one are clearly stressful, they occur relatively frequently. Our daily life is filled with countless hassles. Hassles are the annoying minor events of everyday life that cumulatively affect the physiological well being of an individual. That daily hassles are important causes of stress is suggested by the findings of several studies by Lazarus and his colleagues. The researchers developed a “Hassle Scale” on which individuals indicate the extent to which they have been “hassled” by common occurrences over the past month. The items included on this scale deal with a wide range of everyday events such as having too many things to do once, shopping and concerns over money. It can be concluded that the more stressed people report on the Hassles Scale as a result of daily hassles, the poorer is their psychological well-being.

2. Work Related Stress:
   Jobs or careers are a central source of stress. Some of the factors promoting stress in the work settings are blatant sexual harassment, discrimination or extreme overload. Being asked to do too little work can also cause stress.
Such under load produces intense feelings of boredom and in turn can be very successful. The other cause of work related stress is role conflict – being the target of conflicting demands or expectations from different groups of people. To achieve some goal one has to play some role. This goal achievement through role playing is sometimes so stressful for employees (varies from individual to individual) that they become sick, down with stressful conditions (physical as well as mental symptoms) and hence they need to be rehabilitated to normal health through physical and mental treatments (counseling by psychiatrist and or treatment by physician), because Managers are high risk people, on the contrary non managerial employees are very sensitive to stressful conditions. Another work related stressor involves performance appraisals, procedures used for evaluating an employees performance. If employees perceive them as fair, stress tends to be low, but if employees view them as unfair, then it is certain to be high. After all, no one wants to feel that rewards such as promotions or bonus are being distributed in an unjust manner.
Additional Factors that can cause work related stress are:

- Role Ambiguity- uncertainty about duties and responsibility
- Responsibility for others
- Lack of participation in decision making
- Conflict with other employees
- Unpleasant work environment
- Lack of Support from employees

Fortunately there are many methods that can reduce such stressors.

1) Employers can reduce workplace stress by considering the person environment (PE) fit. It is the appropriateness of the match of a person and his or her work environment. A poor PE fit may produce stress.

2) Social rapport both on and off the job can serve as a buffer against stressful events that occur at work.

3) Companies can reduce workplace stress by implementing inventories that improve their employees ability to cope with the workplace stress and change unhealthy practices that can intensify the effects of stress
3. **Environmental stressors:**
   Many people are stressed out because of being unable to adapt to the changing environment. It is not necessary that major life events are positive or negative, pleasant or unpleasant.
   Events such as marriage, a new job, a vacation, are positive environmental events but they have a stress value depending on the amount of readjustment required.

4. **Stressful Life Events:**
   Most people experience traumatic events or danger at some point or the other in their lives. Some examples of traumatic events are: death of a loved one, injury to one's child, war, and failure in school or at work.
**BURNOUT STAGE**

Understanding Burnout:

Two important definitions of burnout are:

- "A state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in emotionally demanding situations."
  - Ayala Pines & Elliott Aronson

- "A state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward." – Herbert J Freudenberger

Between them, these definitions embrace the essence of burnout, with the first stressing the part that exhaustion plays in it, and the second stressing the sense of disillusionment that is at its core.

Anyone can become exhausted. What is so poignant about burnout is that it mainly strikes people who are highly committed to their work: You can only "burn out" if you have been "alight" in the first place. While exhaustion can be overcome with rest, a core part of burnout is a deep sense of disillusionment, and is not experienced by people who can take a more cynical view of their work.
Burnout is the relationship between Job Satisfaction and Age. The graph below explains the relationship:

During the initial phase the employee faces challenges with plenty of energy having a positive response, and continues to do so till he reaches a plateau where Job Satisfaction is maximum.

After reaching the plateau the employee starts to face the declining stage i.e. feeling tired, lack of interest. Quality of work begins to suffer and finally leads to breakdown where job satisfaction becomes zero or can even become negative.
This is a place of “NO RETURN” (physically and mentally sick) for the employee. However the employee should not be allowed to languish like a terminal patient but must be rehabilitated back to (restored) normal health through counseling process and psychiatrist treatment. This situation is applicable to banking employees and employees at managerial and non-managerial level, who feel completely burnt out i.e. no energy to perform and thus reaching a stage of burnout.

Exhaustion- An Important Factor

Hans Selye, one of the founding fathers of stress research, looked at burnout as the final stage of stress

1 ALARM STAGE
2 RESISTANCE STAGE
3 EXHAUSTION STAGE
4 BURNOUT STAGE

Over many hundreds of experiments, Selye looked at the way in which animals handled long-term stress. What he saw was that after an initial period of adaptation, they survived very well for quite a long period of time until, and then all of a sudden, their resistance collapsed without any obvious direct cause.
Selye also saw this with bomber pilots in the Second World War, who would fly effectively for many missions, but who would then fall apart as pilot fatigue set in.

We have probably all seen similar patterns in the past, where people become exhausted and their performance suffers. We may all have worked so hard at something, for so long, that the easy things become difficult and life loses its flavor. These are times when rest (often in the form of a good holiday) helps us to approach the situation with a new vigor.

Exhaustion and long-term stress contribute to burnout, but they are not the most destructive parts of it.

**Disillusionment – the underlying cause**

The real damage of burnout comes from the sense of deep disillusionment that lies at its heart.

Many of us get our sense of identity and meaning from our work. We may have started our careers with high ideals or high ambitions and may have followed these with passion.
These ideals can drive a highly motivated, passionate approach to work. It is incredible what we can achieve when we truly believe in what we are doing: We are hard working, effective, full of initiative, energetic and selfless. We can find ourselves doing much more than we are contracted to do, working much longer hours. Even more, we enjoy doing this.

The problem comes when things become too much. Perhaps exhaustion sets in because people have been working too hard for too long. Perhaps performance begins to slip because of this. Perhaps the problem being solved is too great, and the resources available are too meager. Perhaps supportive mentors move on and are replaced by people who do not appreciate the heroic job that is being done, or do not subscribe to the ideals that drive performance. Perhaps co-workers or team members make just too many emotional demands, or people being served prove to be ungrateful and difficult.

Being proactive, energetic, committed people, it is likely that we respond to obstacles like these by increasing our commitment and hard work. However, in these circumstances it is possible that these efforts may have little or no impact on the situation.

This can be where burnout begins to set in. As we get less satisfaction from our jobs, the downsides of these jobs become more troublesome.
As we get more tired, we have less energy to give. If our organizations fail to support us, we can get increasingly disenchanted with them. We become increasingly disillusioned.

In extreme cases, we can lose faith completely in what we are doing, and what our organizations are doing, becoming cynical and embittered, and feeling that our ideals and meanings in life count for nothing. This is full-scale burnout.

**Symptoms of Burnout**

Given what burnout is, the symptoms of burnout are much as you would expect them to be. Physical symptoms can include physical fatigue, frequent illness and sleep problems.

Emotional symptoms include disillusionment with the job; the loss of a sense of meaning and cynicism towards our organizations or clients; feelings of helplessness; frustration of efforts and a lack of power to change events; strong feelings of anger against the people we hold responsible for the situation; and feelings of depression and isolation.

Behavioral symptoms can include increasing detachment from co-workers, increased absenteeism, and an increased harshness in dealing with our teams, marked reduction in our commitment to our work, and increased alcohol consumption. These symptoms reflect exhaustion and a loss of satisfaction with work.
Recovering From Burnout

Maybe you've reached the stage where you are thoroughly disillusioned with your job and where you no longer get anything of emotional value from it. You may feel let down or betrayed by your organization, and may be "going through the motions" just for the money your job brings in.

While you can deal with exhaustion by taking a good break, rest may not cure this sense of disillusionment. The passion and commitment that you previously brought to your job may now have completely burned out. Without this, your career may not progress much further.

People deal with this situation in a number of different ways. Some are effective, while others are not so good:

- **Doing Nothing**: Often, one of the worst ways of dealing with burnout is to accept it and do nothing about it. By remaining in place, you risk becoming bitter and angry as opportunities pass you by. Your organization may come to regard you as "dead wood" and if things do not change, you may be doomed to a gradual or sudden decline. You need to change the situation in some way.
• **Changing Career:** If you have lost all interest in the values that led you into your profession in the first place, then career change may be the best the first downside of this, however, is that you lose the benefit of the precious experience you have already gained within the profession. In entering a new profession, you will be competing equally with people much younger than you, and these people may be willing to accept much lower salaries.

Second downside is that you risk a strong sense of failure in the way you handled things, whereas burnout will only have been a temporary setback if you succeed in turning the situation around.

• **Changing Jobs:** Job change within the same profession is usually less of an issue than full-scale career change, in that many of your skills and much of your experience will be transferable. Job change gives you the opportunity to rededicate yourself to your original goals. It also provides a fresh start in a new environment, without the painful reminders that come with staying in the same job.

Changing jobs is an appropriate response where you are disillusioned with your organization more than you are with your career. What you risk, however, is ending up in the same situation again: In changing your job, you must make sure that you understand what lead you to burn out, and ensure that history does not repeat itself. Looking at this positively, you
• should know what to look for, and have a good idea of how to avoid it!
• **Using Burnout as a Trigger for Personal Growth:** This is probably one of the most positive ways that people manage burnout: By using it as a wakeup call to re-evaluate the way they want to live their lives and what they want to achieve.
REFERENCES


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