CHAPTER – IV

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF STRESS DYNAMICS
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4.1. THE MEANING OF STRESS

Stress has become a major concern of the modern times as it can cause harm to employee’s health and performance. Different psychologists and physiologists have defined stress differently. In simple words, stress refers to pressures or tension people feel in life. As a living human being makes constant demands, it definitely produces pressure, i.e., stress. Stress is therefore, a natural and unavoidable feature of human life. However, stress beyond a particular level can cause psychological and psychological problems, which in turn would affect the individual’s performance in the organisation. Thus, management of stress has become a challenging job for the modern organisations.

Stress is usually thought of in negative terms. It is thought to be caused by something bad (for example, a college student is placed on scholastic probation, a loved one is seriously ill, or the boss gives a formal reprimand for poor performance). This is a form of distress. But there is also a positive, pleasant side of stress caused by good things (for example, a college student makes the dean’s list; and attracted, respected acquaintance asks for a date; an employee is ordered a job promotion at another location). This is a form of stress. This latter term was coined by the pioneers of stress research from the Greek eu, which means, “good”. In other words, stress can be viewed in a number of different ways and has been described as the most imprecise word in the scientific dictionary. The word “stress” has also been compared with the word “sin”.

4.2. DEFINITION OF STRESS

Stress is an experience that creates physiological and psychological imbalances within a person. It is a body reaction to any demands of changes in external environment, such as temperature, pollution, humidity and working conditions, which leads to stress. In these days of competition, when wishes to surpass what has been achieved by others, leading to an imbalance between demands and resources, it causes psycho-social stress. Thus, stress is a part and parcel of everyday life.
The origin of the concept of stress predates antiquity. Hans Selye has defined stress as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it. The concept of stress has been borrowed from the natural sciences. During the 18th and 19th Century, Stress was equated with resists these forces and attempts to maintain its original state. The following chart presents the features of stress dynamics.

**Figure No. 4.1**
Stressor – Stress Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stressor</th>
<th>Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An external demand</td>
<td>A response to the External event:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or event:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme temperature</td>
<td>Increased blood pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme lighting</td>
<td>Elevated heart rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sleep</td>
<td>Dilated pupils</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure No. 4.2**
Stress Can Affect Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stressor</th>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An external demand</td>
<td>A response to the External Event</td>
<td>Performance affects Performance behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Or event:</td>
<td>Performance affects Performance behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual narrowing</td>
<td>Reduced cognitive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of heuristics</td>
<td>Longer Task completion time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3. GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME

The stress experience was first documented fifty years ago by Dr. Hans Selye, the Montreal-based pioneer in stress research. Selye determined that people have a fairly consistent physiological response to stressful situations. This response, called the general adaptation syndrome, provides an automatic defence system to help cope with environmental demands. Exhibit illustrates the three stages of the general adaptation syndrome: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. The line in this exhibit shows the individual’s energy and ability to cope with the stressful situation. Alarm reaction In the alarm reaction stage, the perception of a threatening or challenging situation causes the brain to send a biochemical message to various parts of the body, resulting in an increased respiration rate, blood pressure, heartbeat, muscle tension, and other physiological responses. The individual’s energy level and coping effectiveness initially decrease in response to the initial shock. Extreme shock, however, may result in incapacity or death because the body is unable to generate enough energy quickly to cope. In most situations, the alarm reaction alerts the person to the environmental condition and prepares the body for the resistance stage.

Resistance: A person’s ability to cope with the environmental demand rises above a normal state during the resistance stage because the body has activated
various biochemical, psychological, and behavioural mechanisms. For example, there is a higher than normal level of adrenaline during this stage, which gives the body more energy to overcome or remove the source of stress. However, the body’s resistance is directed to only one or two environmental demands, so that the individual becomes more vulnerable to other sources of stress. This explains why people are more likely to catch cold or other illnesses when they have been working under pressure.

**Figure No. 4.4**

**SELYE’S GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME**

![SELYE’S GENERAL ADAPTATION SYNDROME](source)


**Exhaustion:** People have a limited resistance capacity and, if the source of stress persists, they will eventually move into the exhaustion stage as this capacity diminishes. In most work situations, the general adaptation syndrome process ends long before total exhaustion. Employees resolve tense situations before the destructive consequences of stress become manifest, or they withdraw from the stressful situation, rebuild their survival capabilities, and return later to the stressful environment with renewed energy. However, people who frequently experience the general adaptation syndrome have increased risk of long-term physiological and psychological damage. The general adaptation syndrome describes the stress experience, but this is only part of the picture. To effectively manage work-related stress, one must understand its causes and consequences as well as individual differences in the stress experience.)
4.4. STRESS REACTIONS

In his research, first published in his classic book The Stress of Life, Hans Selye summarized stress reactivity as a three-phase process termed the general adaptation syndrome:

**Phase 1:** Alarm Reaction. The body shows the changes characteristic of the first exposure to stressor. At the same time, its resistance is diminished and, if the stressor is sufficiently strong (severe burns, extremes of temperature), death may result.

**Phase 2:** Stage of Resistance. Resistance ensures if continued exposure to the stressor is compatible with adaptation. The bodily signs characteristics of the alarm reaction have virtually disappeared and resistance rises above normal.

**Phase 3:** Stage of Exhaustion. Following long-continued exposure to the stressor, to which the body had become adjusted, eventually adaptation energy is exhausted. The signs of the alarm reaction reappear, but now they are irreversible, and the individual dies (Greenberg, 1990).

**Figure 4.5**

**STRESS LEVEL AND PERFORMANCE**

The graph below shows the way in which performance can suffer when one is under excessive long term stress:
Sources of managerial stress have been well documented since the late 1970s. Ivancevich and Matteson (1980)\(^2\) identified meeting the demand versus not meeting it (Mc Grath, 1976)\(^3\). From the four categories of work stressors: physical environment, individual level (a mixer of role and career development variables), group level
(primarily relationship-based) and organisational level (a mixture of climate, structure, job design and task characteristic).

Schuler (1982) also identify seven categories of work stressors in organisations: job qualities, relationships, organisational structure, physical qualities, career development, change and role in the organisation.

Quick and Quick (1984) proposed three categories of stressors: task demands, physical demands and interpersonal demands. Stress is involved in an environmental situation that perceived as presenting demand which threatens to exceed the person’s capabilities and resources for meeting it, under conditions where he or she expects a substantial differential in the rewards and costs from documented evidence, it is clear that as far as work life is concerned, extreme stress is so aversive to employees that they will try to avoid it by withdrawing either psychologically (through disinterest or lack of involvement in the job etc.). Physically frequent late coming, absenteeism, lethargy, etc. or by leaving the job entirely (Beehr and Newman, 1978). It predisposes the individual to develop several psycho-somatic illness; in contrast, the absence of extreme stress would result in more satisfied, happy, healthy and effective employees.

However, the stress one experiences in the job varies from mild to severe depending on one’s physiological, psychological and social make up (French and Caplan, 1970, Margolis et al., 1974., Miller 1960 and Wardwell et al., 1964). Stressors at the individual level have been studied more than any other category. Role conflicts, role ambiguity, role overload and under load, is widely examined in Indian Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, vol. 7, no. 2, may-august 2003 (Mc Grath 1976; Newton and Keenan, 1987). It is also reported by many researchers that the low job satisfaction was associated with high stress (Hollingworth et al., Abdul Halim, 1981; Keller et al., 1975; Leigh et al, 1988). Age can be explained in the terms that the individuals matured personality disposition related to the attainment of developmental tasks specific to each developmental tasks specific to; each developmental phase and its influence on the individual’s perception of the situations as stressful or otherwise.
4.5. SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Symptoms from stress tend to progress through several phases or stages. The phases can be described as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Signs/Symptoms</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1 - Warning</strong></td>
<td>• Feelings of vague anxiety</td>
<td>• Talking about feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Depression</td>
<td>• Taking a vacation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Boredom</td>
<td>• Making a change from regular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Apathy</td>
<td>• Taking time for yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emotional fatigue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Talking about feelings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Taking a vacation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Making a change from regular activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Taking time for yourself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Intensified physical and emotional fatigue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 2 - Mild</strong></td>
<td>• Sleep disturbances</td>
<td>• More aggressive lifestyle changes may be needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symptoms</strong></td>
<td>• More frequent headaches/colds</td>
<td>• Short-term counselling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Muscle aches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Intensified physical and emotional fatigue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Withdrawal from contact with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Irritability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Intensified depression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 3 - Entrenched</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cumulative Stress</strong></td>
<td>The help of medical and psychological professionals is highly recommended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased use of alcohol, smoking, non-prescription drugs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Depression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Physical and emotional fatigue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Loss of sex drive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ulcers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Marital discord</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase</td>
<td>Signs/Symptoms</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Crying spells  
• Intense anxiety  
• Rigid thinking  
• Withdrawal  
• Restlessness  
• Sleeplessness | | |

**Phase 4 - Severe/Debilitating Cumulative Stress Reaction**

This phase is often considered "self-destructive" and tends to occur after 5 to 10 years of continued stress.

| • Careers end prematurely  
• Asthma  
• Heart conditions  
• Severe depression  
• Lowered self-esteem/self-confidence  
• Inability to perform one's job  
• Inability to manage personal life  
• Withdrawal  
• Uncontrolled anger, grief, rage  
• Suicidal or homicidal thinking  
• Muscle tremors  
• Extreme chronic fatigue  
• Over-reaction to minor events  
• Agitation  
• Frequent accidents  
• Carelessness, forgetfulness  
• Paranoia | | Significant intervention from professionals. |

(From: Anschuetz, B.L. "The High Cost of Caring: Coping with Workplace Stress" in Sharing: Epilepsy, Ontario)
4.6. SOME DIFFICULTIES AND APPROACH TO MEASUREMENT

Generally, the many complex forces at work within organisational settings where large numbers are employed, and the individual differences among the employees tend to make it difficult to draw causal links between the different variables to identify any specific causes of mental or physical health problems. The recursive causative nature of relationships that exist between organisational and individual variables do not easily lend themselves to accurate measurement and interpretation. Past research on stress and health help in understanding the relationship between environmental stressors, individual factors affecting the perception of stress and individual’s physiological susceptibility. Most researchers have focused on these individual aspects but rarely on all three. Attempts will be made to integrate these three aspects in an effort to propose some psychological and management strategies which may also have wider implications for other organisations.

4.7. CATEGORIES OF JOB STRESSORS

In the workplace, stress can be the result of any number of situations. Some examples include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Job Stressors</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors unique to the job</td>
<td>• Workload (overload and under load)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pace / variety / meaningfulness of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Autonomy (e.g., the ability to make own decisions about one’s own job or about specific tasks)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shift work / hours of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Physical environment (noise, air quality, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Isolation at the workplace (emotional or working alone)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role in the organisation</td>
<td>• Role conflict (conflicting job demands, multiple supervisors/managers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Role ambiguity (lack of clarity about responsibilities, expectations, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Level of responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                         | • Under/over-promotion  
|                         | • Job security (fear of redundancy either from economy, or a lack of tasks or work to do)  
|                         | • Career development opportunities  
|                         | • Overall job satisfaction  
| Relationships at work (Interpersonal) | • Supervisors  
|                         | • Co-workers  
|                         | • Subordinates  
|                         | • Threat of violence, harassment, etc (threats to personal safety)  
| Organisational structure/climate | • Participation (or non-participation) in decision-making  
|                         | • Management style  
|                         | • Communication patterns  

(Adapted from: Murphy, L. R., Occupational Stress Management: Current Status and Future Direction, in Trends in Organisational Behavior, 1995, Vol. 2., p. 1)

4.8. THE COST OF STRESS

Stress has a high cost – a high human cost but also a high financial cost – and it figures as one of the main causes of sick leave. A number of studies underline the fact that the costs of stress to society are increasing continuously.

High levels of stress have detrimental effects on workers’ health and may lead to a variety of disorders and illness, including hypertension and also alter the immune system. In addition, the loss of the capacity to cope with working and social situations can lead to less success at work, possibly unemployment. It can give rise to a greater strain in family relationships and even result in depression or death.

For enterprises, the cost of stress is multi-faceted. It can be reflected in absenteeism, higher medical costs and employee turnover, with the associated cost of recruiting and training new workers. It can also take the form of diminished productivity and efficiency. According to calculations from Volvo Trucks, a non-manual worker suffering from burnout costs the enterprise SEK 1 million (US$
95,400) and an executive more than SEK 4 million (US$ 381,500). This cost factor should already be a good reason for governments and employers to act and take effective steps to improve the situation.

4.8.1. COST OF WORK – RELATED STRESS

- In the United Kingdom, it has been suggested that over 40 million working days are lost each year due to stress-related disorders. According to one estimate, stress cost British industry two or three per cent of gross domestic product a year.

- In Australia, the Federal Assistant Minister for Industrial relations estimated the cost of occupational stress to be around A$30 million in 1994 (US$ 22 million). A$ 55 million were paid out on stress claims in 1998/99.

- In the United States, over half of the 550 million working days lost each year due to absenteeism are stress-related.

- In Switzerland, the direct costs of stress amounted to about CHF4.2 billion (US$ 2.6 billion) in 2000.

(Source: ILO (1992), Safe Work and International Metal Workers' Federation. For Switzerland, figures from the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs)

4.9. MANAGING STRESS

Stress is an inevitable part of the work environment in the 21st Century. Learning to manage it positively at all levels is the key to high performance. Most people use the word “stress” in its negative sense. Managers found its negative impact on team performance. In a research survey conducted in member-countries of the OECD (organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) in 1999, increased global competition, the changing nature of work, sub-contracting and outsourcing, mergers and acquisitions, restructuring and downsizing, and reduced opportunities for permanent employment were indicated as major contributors to increased stress at the workplace. In a survey on India’s call centre industry conducted in 2003 by Dataquest, a leading IT magazine, the findings identified job stress and work related ailments as ever-present realities. The costs to companies were high attrition rates, de-motivated employees and high recruitment costs. Apart from late night work schedules (35%) and salaries (39%), the other reasons cited for high
attrition rates were the following: no opportunities for growth (33%), physical illness (27%), physical strain (27%), no personal life (25%) and insufficient leave/holidays (23%).

In the 21st century workplace, uncertainty and continuous change are seen as inevitable elements of professional life. Managers often ask this question. “Is work stress always ‘bad’ for me and my team?” Some researchers argue that stress is not always bad for individuals. On the contrary, an optimal level of stress is necessary to motivate and energize people in organisations. Too much or too little stress is harmful to individuals. Whereas high amounts of stress lead to hypertension, burnout, depression and hyper anxiety, too little of it leads to boredom, monotony and loss of interest in the job.

Prof D M Pestonjee (1999)\(^1\), a well-known expert on stress research, classified stress into two categories – ‘hyper stress’, where there is over-activation of heavy demands in terms of time or responsibilities; and ‘hypo-stress’, in which the individual suffers from a lack of activation, characterised by lassitude and boredom. He further argues that it is “natural and healthy to maintain an optimal level of stress” and “success, achievement, higher productivity and effectiveness call for stress.” When successes are left unchecked and unmanaged, they can create problems in performance and affect the health and well-being of the individual.

Another popular phenomenon mentioned by Pestonjee is the ‘burn-out stress syndrome (BOSS)’, which can be defined as the consequence of high levels of job stress, personal frustration, and inadequate coping skills. BOSS tends to have major personal, organisational and social costs, and these costs are probably increasing. BOSS can lead to at least four types of stress-related consequences, such as depletion of energy reserves, lowered resistance to illness, increased dis-satisfaction and pessimism, and increased absenteeism and inefficiency at work. Contrary to BOSS, and the opposite phenomenon, the ‘rust out stress syndrome (ROSS),’ is a case involving stress under load. It occurs when there is a gap between a person’s actual performance, potential and inadequate job demands.
4.10. STRESS AT THE WORKPLACE

Stress is defined as "an adaptive response, moderated by individual differences, that is a consequence of any action, situation, or event that places special demands on a person." The three important features of this definition are to be noted: It refers to a reaction to a situation, not the situation itself (the latter often called a stressor). It highlights the individual nature of stress, meaning that while all people do not find the same events stressful, this difference does not negate the potential negative impact that stress has on people. Perhaps the most important word in the definition is "special," since only significant or unusual situations, rather than the day-to-day minor adjustments of life, can really be said to produce stress. Many sources of stress today have been around for years, such as work overload; role conflict; ineffective, hostile and incompetent bosses; lack of personal fit with a job; lack of recognition; lack of a clear job description or chain of command; fear, uncertainty, and doubt about career progress; and prejudice based on age, gender, ethnicity or religion. The decade of the 90s has ushered in some additional stressful situations that are of particular concern today. These include:

- Competition and Change
- Technological Change
- Increasingly Diverse Workforce
- Downsizing
- Employee Empowerment and Teamwork
- Work/Home Conflict
- Elder and Child Care
- Violence in the Workplace

4.11. DETERMINING STRESS LEVELS IN ORGANISATIONS

Quick and Quick (1984) suggest several diagnostic procedures for determining stress levels in organisations. Interviews allow in-depth probing, but they are time consuming and depend primarily on the listening skills of the interviewer. Questionnaires have the advantage of being able to process higher volumes of data, but they often lose the "flavor" or feel of the responses. Observational techniques (both medical and behavioral) can be either quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative techniques might involve gathering company records, such as the rates of
absenteeism, tardiness, turnover, and production. Qualitative techniques involve observing workers for signs of stress-related behaviour.

According to Lefton (1985)\textsuperscript{11}, Stress at work usually occurs because a workload is too light and under-stimulating or because ... it is too heavy and burdensome... Coping strategies should begin at the biological level. (p. 505-507) The psychological insight of Zimbardo (1985)\textsuperscript{12} needs to be considered as well. Zimbardo (1985)\textsuperscript{13} states that, "Stress is the pattern of specific and nonspecific responses an organism makes to stimulus events that disturb its equilibrium and tax or exceed its ability to cope," and he adds, "A stressor is a stimulus event that places a demand on an organism for some kind of adoptive response" (p. 496). Thus he throws psychological light on the subject, and opens up stress to an organism's response to a disturbing stimulus. He points out that stress affects competence and intelligence, and that it can actually lower a person's Intelligent Quotient. His stress model, slightly revised for burn-out due to workload, is in the figure below:

**Figure No. 4.8**

**DETERMINING STRESS LEVELS IN ORGANISATIONS**

Virtually all authorities agree that the result of too much stress (too much workload) over a long period of time is burn-out.
4.12. GLOBALISATION OF THE ECONOMY

The influence that globalisation of the economy on changes in the contemporary environment of organisations is well recognised (Carrithers, 1992; Cascio, 1995; Kochan, 1997; Schabracq & Cooper, 2000). Globalisation refers to the large volume of business transactions that move across the globe at an increasingly accelerated rate (Graddick, 1992). This phenomenon has promoted escalating domestic and global competition and the rapid movement of financial markets (Cascio, 1995; James, 1997). Accompanying these global trends is the demand for high-organisational performance that necessitates tougher competition, rapid changes in information technology, increased productivity, greater organisational and worker flexibility, and lower costs in the provision of goods and services (Berwald, 1998; Carrithers, 1992; Kirby, 1999; Kochan, 1997).

Among the consequences of operating in such an increasingly complex global environment is the potential for the worker to experience increased strain and work stress. For instance, globalisation has resulted in a flood of redundancies, in an effort to downsise and minimise costs, which has ultimately resulted in increased demands on the remaining workforce (Kirby, 1999; Maslach, 1999). To maintain and enhance productivity and keep abreast of global market demands, workers are under increasing pressure to work longer hours (Heiler, 1998; Hetrick, 2000; Townley, 2000), work at a faster pace (Bousfield, 1999; Humphrey, 1998), increase workloads (Townley, 2000), and become multi-skilled (Sauter & Hurrell, 1999).

A major change, common to many organisations, has been the introduction of longer work shifts (Heiler, 1998; Thomas, 1998). In an attempt to achieve higher levels of product quality and maintain competitive advantage, many organisations have levelled out hierarchical structures, reduced overall number of employees and adopted such practices as self-managed teams and learner production processes (Cascio, 1995; Sauter & Hurrell, 1999). This has resulted in increased responsibility and ill-defined work roles for workers (Johns, 1998; Thomas, 1998). New employment relationships have resulted in jobs becoming less stable and secure. For example, temporary employment has increased by 400 percent since the early 1980’s and it is predicted that by the year 2020 a quarter of the workforce could be working.
in non-traditional employment arrangements (Judy & D’Amico, 1997; Kochan, Smith, Wells & Rebitzer, 1994).

Workers are required to perform many and varied tasks, work as team members, self-manage, and learn new work tasks rapidly as the organisation changes to remain competitive. As a result, jobs have become ill-defined, exacerbating issues such as role ambiguity and role conflict. These factors, in turn, have the potential to lead to work stress and illness (Dunette, 1998; Lee & Ashforth, 1991; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Johns, 1998)\(^20\).

4.13. THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

In addition to the onslaught of globalisation, the development of rapidly changing technologies has influenced the working environment. These advances in technology have resulted in the downsizing of many organisations as tasks that were undertaken by manual labour become automated. Technology has also enabled a profound increase in the automated monitoring of performance in the workplace (Aiello & Kolb, 1995)\(^21\), thus increasing performance pressure. A variety of worker activities are now under surveillance as organisations can record telephone usage, real-time computer performance (i.e., number of key strokes per minute) and even the length of restroom breaks.

According to Humphrey (1998)\(^22\), intrusions of this nature are affecting millions of workers worldwide in such industries as the airlines, government agencies, insurance companies and telephone companies.

Rosch (1991)\(^23\) coined the term ‘techno-stress’ to refer to the frustrations, anxiety, de-humanisation and depression that is increasingly evident in ‘high-tech’ work environments. He, along with many other researchers, has indicated that techno-stress is becoming a growing concern among workers. Techno-stress is particularly relevant in industries where information overload stems from the sheer volume of information that is obtained from facsimile machines, cellular telephones, conference calls, electronic mail and personal pagers.
4.14. THE INTERACTION BETWEEN WORKER AND JOB

Most researchers have acknowledged the need to examine the complex, and sometimes subtle, interactions between workers and their workplaces rather than focusing on either component individually. As Cotton (1996)\textsuperscript{24} noted, personal vulnerabilities are probably the most significant predictors of the experience of stress. However, organisational demands are likely to be the strongest determinants of morale and organisational commitment (Jones, Flynn & Kelloway, 1995) As Cotton (1996) suggested, claims for compensation in cases of psychological injury are most
likely to occur when the experience of stress is combined with low morale in the workplace (see also Schofield, 1996). This notion clearly gives credence to the importance of the interaction between a worker and his or her environment. Several popular models of work stress have acknowledged the role of the interaction or match between workers and their jobs. The assumptions that underlie the Person-Environment Fit model (Swanson & Fouad, 1999)\textsuperscript{25} stated that individuals will seek outwork environments that are congruent with their characteristics. They search for environments that will enable them to express their skills, abilities, attitudes, values and needs (Holland, 1997)\textsuperscript{26}. Lofquist and Dawis (1984) noted that when an individual’s skills and abilities match those required by the job, the match will result in ‘satisfaction’. When the individual’s attitudes and values match the rewards that are available in the job, then the worker will experience satisfaction. This theory indicates that both satisfactoriness and satisfaction are necessary conditions of work adjustment. Thus, strain is the result of a discrepancy between person and environment at either level. Other research has suggested that the interaction between the worker and his or her job is important because the negative effect of job stressors can be offset by benefits the individual derives from the work environment. Although dissatisfaction with one’s job has been primarily considered to be an outcome of the work stress process (Cherniss, 1980), some research has shown that satisfaction with one’s work content may actually provide an important buffer against the negative effect of stress (Macdonald & Upsdell, 1996)\textsuperscript{27}.

4.15. WORK ENVIRONMENT

The following have been outlined as sources of work stress: the characteristic of the job itself, the role of the person and/or job in the organisation; the nature of the relationships at work and the problems associated with the interface between the organisation and the outside world, e.g., work versus family. (Cooper, 1981; Sauter, Murphy & Hurrell, 1990). It might be argued that if issues of control are central to coping with stress, the ‘artificial’ environment and relations forced on the workforce plus the limited amount of available individual control has actually created the increase in levels of stress in people at work. According to a World Health Organisation report, ‘About 50 percent of the entire working population are unhappy in their jobs and as many as 90 percent may be spending much of their time and energy in work that brings them no closer to their goals in life. About 75 percent of
those who consult psychiatrists are experiencing problems that can be traced to a lack of job satisfaction.' (Levi, 1990)\textsuperscript{28} Much of the publicity in the media with regard to stress has focused upon the previously mentioned link between Type A behaviour patterns of primarily management personnel and CHD. However, given the apparent centrality of the issue of control in relation to stress and their comparatively lower levels of control, the blue-collar workers are at greater risk to the effects of stress than white collar workers. (Cooper & Smith, 1985)\textsuperscript{29} By contrast, “white-collar workers often having more latitude in what they do and when and hence more control, this has the effect of lowering the impact of stressors”. Fisher, (1985)\textsuperscript{30} It has been shown how further down the skill level in the ‘job-chain’ one looks the worse off the mental health of those groups becomes. (Cooper, 1981; Fletcher, 1988)\textsuperscript{31} Furthermore, it has also been shown how ‘...conditions of work most adverse to workers’ health are to be found in blue-collar professions and in some health care positions such as nursing.... A common and possibly decisive denominator of these work conditions is that they expose the worker to a combination of high psychological stress and physical workload and a low level of decision latitude’. Levi, (1990).

4.15.1. SOCIAL CLIMATE

The social climate of an organisation is often viewed as a cause of stress. However, social climate is a relativistic concept, and "the social climate of an organisation is whatever most of the people think it is." (Albrecht, 1979, p. 167)\textsuperscript{32} There are three factors that need to be examined when evaluating social climate. The first is the degree to which employees identify with or alienate themselves from the organisation. Employee attitude surveys are an effective method of measuring this factor. Identification can be measured through employees pride in membership, and the extent to which they take initiative and offer constructive suggestions. Alienation can be detected by examining whether members openly criticize the organisation, or the degree to which they oppose change. The second factor of organisational climate is the degree to which labor and management are polarized. One of the most effective ways of dealing with this problem is to make all levels of management more visible and accessible. Employees are less likely to criticize management who they see on a regular basis. The goal is to change the perception from "they" (the managers) to "we" (the members of the organisation). The third factor is the perceived social norms of the organisation. Social norms are abstract organisational values, such as trust,
fairness, and respect. Interviews and questionnaires can be used to ascertain organizational social norms, but corrective action involves setting up management programs that clarify organizational values, and may involve replacing certain managers when necessary.

4.15.2. THE IMPACT OF WORK STRESS

Over the last decade, the escalating costs associated with workplace stress indicate an international trend among industrial countries (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Shergold, 1995). For instance, in the United States, the number of stress claims has trebled in the last year with 15 percent of all workers compensation claims being for stress. The cost to organisations of this level of occupational stress lies anywhere between 200 and 300 billion dollars per year as a result of high staff turnover, increased health and workers’ compensation claims and decreased productivity (Wojcik, 1999). In addition, recent figures emanating from Britain have indicated that approximately 70,000 workers are absent from work due to occupational stress every year (McKee, 1996) costing the nation around seven billion pounds in lost productivity, worker entitlements and health care. A subsequent result of these factors is the loss of 40 million working days per year (Shergold, 1995). Hodgson, Jones, Elliott and Osman (1993) reported that in one year, 5.9 percent of workers surveyed in England and Wales recorded having an illness that was caused or made worse by work. Almost 14 percent of the population reported they had suffered work stress or depression in the previous year. Three occupational groups showed raised rates of stress, namely teachers, welfare workers and other health professionals. The stress rate among teachers was particularly marked, being over four times the average. The Canadian Compensation Board (1996) found that 60 percent of Canadian workers felt negative stress in the workplace, and 80 per cent of this group stated that stress was adversely affecting their job performance and health. Workers between the ages of 25 and 44 years, as well as managerial and professional employees were identified as the groups that tended to be more likely to lodge a stress claim.

4.15.3. LEARNING PROCESSES

- Having a "bad experience" causes some people to later be stressed in that situation, i.e. pairing a neutral stimulus (situation) with a painful, scary
experience will condition a fear response to the previously neutral stimulus (classical conditioning).

- Fears and other weaknesses may yield payoffs; the payoffs (like attention or dependency) cause the fear to grow. (Operant conditioning).

4.15.4. STRESSORS: THE CAUSES OF STRESS

Stressors, the causes of stress, include any environmental condition that place a physical or emotional demand on the person. There are numerous stressors in organisational settings and other life activities. Exhibit lists the four main types of work related stressors: interpersonal, role-related, task control, and organisational and physical environment stressors.

Figure No. 4.10
CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

4.15.5. STRESSORS ASSOCIATED WITH EMPLOYMENT (KELLOWAY & BARTLING, 1994).

1. **Workload** - includes both quantitative (i.e., quantity of work, time pressure) and qualitative (lack of training, degree of difficulty load)

2. **Work Schedule** – working overtime or irregular hours, lack of notice regarding changes in schedule

3. **Job Content**-including the significance or importance of tasks, the amount of routine work and the opportunity to use skills.

4. **Lack of Control** -including control over the work schedule, method of work and control over job content

5. **Feedback and Rewards**-including receipt of feedback on performance and the absence of formal rewards and recognition

6. **Role stressors**-including role ambiguity and role conflict

7. **Job Security** -including the welfare measures

8. **Interpersonal relations**-quality of relations

9. **Supervision** - stressors associated with both being supervised and supervising others

10. **Physical Working Conditions**-working with outdated equipment or in poorly maintained environments/buildings.

11. **Work and Family Balance** – the extent to which work demands interfere with family life, includes the disruptions associated with postings

12. **External Relations** – public perceptions of the relations with the local community

13. **Organisational stressors** – perceived lack of planning, lack of fairness, lack of trust in decision makers.
The notion of stress thus challenges traditional categories because it bridges physical, mental and social well-being. In introducing such a notion to their manual, the authors may wish to highlight some of the above-mentioned aspects.

### 4.15.6. STRESS LEVEL AND JOB SATISFACTION

Albrecht (1979) hypothesised that there are eight relatively "universal" factors that come into play when evaluating the balance between stress and reward (job satisfaction) in organisations. These are: 1) workload, 2) physical variables, 3) job status, 4) accountability, 5) task variety, 6) human contact, 7) physical challenge, and 8) mental challenge. Each individual has a "comfort zone" for the eight factors. The goal of management is to find the "comfort zone" for each employee which results in optimal performance without producing undesirable side effects. Albrecht's taxonomy is important because it recognises the necessity of balance. For example, Taylorism stresses the ideas of maximum output, minimal task variety, and continuous supervision. The predicted effect of these imbalances would be stress and a reduction in job satisfaction. Perhaps many of today's organisational problems with worker stress are the result of the effective application of Taylorism.
**Figure No. 4.12**

A MODEL OF EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

![Diagram of employee well-being model]

Example of an organisational health research model (‘+’ indicates a positive relationship, ‘-’ indicates a negative relationship. Dotted lines indicate possible relationships that are expected to be comparatively weak).

**Figure No. 4.13**

EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

![Diagram of employee well-being and organisational performance]

In modern living, stress management can be an effective tool for the enhancement of one’s personal life. Stress can lead to many illnesses, including but not limited to headaches, heart attacks, strokes, and digestive and respiratory disorders (e.g., Fried, 1990; Kabat-Zinn, 1990b). A tremendous amount of research has been devoted to validating the benefits of stress reduction techniques such as breathing and stretching in preventing and healing psycho-somatic illnesses and other stress-related disorders (e.g., Fried, 1990; Girdano, Everly, & Dusek, 1990; Kabat-inn, 1990a, 1990b; Sethi, 1989). Proper breathing techniques have been successful in reducing pain and combating psycho-somatic and other stress-related illness (Fried, 1990). For many generations, breathing techniques (paired with a variety of other focusing and relaxation techniques) taught in Lamaze classes, have been beneficial to couples enduring one of life’s more painful stressors: child birth labour and delivery. Through breathing exercises and positive imagery, women are encouraged to focus on the positive aspects of the situation and push through the pain (Bradley, 1995). Although most stressors in life are not associated with simultaneous pain as with child birth, these same techniques would be beneficial to an individual suffering through another type of anxiety-inducing situation. Finally, meditation and yoga have been utilised as effective means of coping with and reducing stress while strengthening physical and emotional endurance (Sethi, 1989).

4.15.7. ORGANISATIONAL STRESSORS

Organisational stressors are various factors in the work place that can cause stress. The general sets of organisation stressors are as follows:

(i) **Task Demands**: Task demands are stressors associated with the specific job a person performs. Some occupations are by nature more stressful than others. The job of surgeons, air traffic controllers, and professional football coaches are more than stressful than those of general practitioners, airplane baggage loaders, and football team equipment managers.

Beyond specific task-related pressures, other aspects of job may possess physical threats to a person’s health. Unhealthy conditions exist in occupations such as coal mining and toxic waste handling. Security is another task demand that can cause stress. Someone in a
relatively secure job is not likely to worry unduly about losing that position. Threats to job security can increase stress dramatically. For example, stress generally increases throughout an organisation during a period of lay-offs or immediately after a merger with another firm.

(ii) **Role Demands**: the sources of stress in organisational role include role ambiguity, role conflict, responsibility towards people and things and other stressors. Role ambiguity involves lack of clarity about the work objectives, expectations of colleagues related to scope and responsibilities of the job. Role conflict arises where the individual is exposed to conflicting job demands or is required to do things which he does not want to do. Responsibility towards people is more stress generating than responsibility towards things (i.e. equipment, materials, etc.). Other role stressors include lack of participation in decision-making, lack of managerial support and need for maintaining high standards of performance.

(iii) **Inter-personal Relationship at work**: The nature of relationship with one’s boss, subordinates and colleagues also form a major source of stress. Poor relations involve low trust, low supportiveness and low interest in listening to and dealing with organisational problems of the members. The members feel more stress if the boss is low on ‘consideration’. “Task oriented” managers cause more stress to subordinates than ‘people-oriented’ managers. Stress is generated not only by the pressure of relationship but also by a lack of adequate social support from colleagues during difficult situations.

(iv) **Organisational Structure and Climate**: This source of stress involves perception of being in the organisation and a threat to one’s freedom, autonomy and identity. Specifically such stressors include: little or no participation in decision-making, lack of belongingness, lack of effective consultation, poor communication, restrictions on behavior and politic by some organisational members.
(v) **Organisational Leadership**: Leadership style also may cause stress. Suppose an employee needs a great deal of social support from his leader but the leader shows no concern or compassion for him, his employee will probably feel stressed. Similarly, an employee who has a strong need to participate in decision-making and to be active in all aspects of management, but his boss is very autocratic and refuses to consult subordinates about anything. Naturally, stress is likely to result.

(vi) **Group Pressures**: Group pressures may include pressure to restrict output, pressure to conform to the group’s norms, and so on. For instance, it is quite common for a work group to arrive at an informal agreement about how much each member will produce. Individuals who produce much more or much less than this level may be pressurised by the group to get back in line. An individual who feels a strong need to vary from the group’s expectations (perhaps to get a pay raise or promotion) will experience a great deal of stress, especially if acceptance by the group is also important to him or her.

4.15.8. INDIVIDUAL STRESSORS

Some stresses at the level of an individual may arise in the context of organisational life or personal life. These include: Career development and personality type which are discussed below.

(i) **Career Development**: There are two major clusters of stressors relating to career development (i) lack of job security (fear of redundancy, obsolescence or early retirement) (ii) status incongruity (under or over promotion and frustration stemming from attainment of one’s career ceiling).

(ii) **Type A and B personality Profiles**: Type A and B profiles were first observed by two cardiologists, Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman. They first got the idea when a worker repairing the upholstery on their waiting-room chairs noted that many of the chairs were worn only on the front.
4.15.9. BURNOUT AND STRESS RELATIONSHIP

4.15.9.1. BURNOUT

Burnout is defined as a syndrome or a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion, as well as cynicism towards one’s work in response to chronic organisational stressors. The emotional exhaustion, one of the more extreme varieties of work-related strain, manifests itself in employees as a general loss of feeling, concern, trust, interest, and/or spirit. Employees’ emotional resources become depleted and they no longer feel able to give of themselves at a psychological level. The emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout relates to feeling depressed, trapped, and hopeless. Family and friends become just one more demand on them in terms of time, patience, and of their resilience to this pressure (Reichel & Neumann, 1993)\(^3\). Social work services are usually provided in an organisational setting. Thus the organisational design that constitutes role structure, power structure, or rule structure has a great effect on job stress and burnout. In particular, conflicting, incompatible, or unclear expectations about one’s professional role within an organisation have been identified as being responsible for job strain in human services areas. In addition, social workers carry a variety of inherent stressors such as: untreatable, combined problems; hard-to-reach clients; sometimes unobservable outcomes of their work; and diminishing resources. Combined with the inherent stressors of the social work profession, role stressors such as role conflict and role ambiguity in social work settings appear to have much greater impact on job strain than do role stressors in any other occupation. Hence, among many important antecedents of burnout, role stressors (role conflict or role ambiguity) have been selected as the major predictive variable of burnout (UM & Harrison, 1998)\(^3\).

Burnout has often been cited as a hazard of social work practice with chronically mentally ill children and adults, with terminally ill patients, and with patients requiring emergency or intensive care. Concern about the impact of sweeping changes that have occurred in the organisation, financing, and delivery of mental health care over the past decade has been expressed. The rapid expansion of for-profit health care, the need to develop income producing services, heavier caseloads and more complex and demanding cases, the pressure to discharge patients earlier, along with ethical dilemmas and value conflicts resulting from financial constraints have all been identified as
potential sources of stress and burnout for mental health counselors and social workers (Siefert & Jayaratne, 1991).  

Job burnout refers to the process of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy (lower feelings of personal accomplishment) resulting from prolonged exposure to stress. The phrase “job burnout” didn’t exist 40 years ago; now it’s heard in everyday conversations. Job burnout is a complex process that includes the dynamics of stress, coping strategies, and stress consequences. Burnout is caused by excessive demands made on people who serve or frequently interact with others. In other words, burnout is mainly due to interpersonal and role-related stressors.

The following model shows that cynicism tends to cause reduced professional efficacy, although some experts now think lower professional efficacy and cynicism occur at the same time as a result of emotional exhaustion.

**Figure No. 4.14**

THE JOB BURNOUT PROCESS

According to Gordon (1986), the first sign of burnout is often a feeling of being *emotionally exhausted* from one's work. Three typical burnout effects are: 1. emotional exhaustion; 2. de-personalisation; 3. feeling of low personal accomplishment. Five things contribute to burnout and they are: a). unrealistically

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high expectations; b). Constraints placed on worker by policies and procedures; c).
Inadequate resources to perform job; d). Non-cooperative or rebellious co-workers; e).
Lack of feedback about one's successes.

Table here under, from Jackson and Schuler (1983)^41 summarises the major causes, reactions, and consequences:

**Figure No. 4.15**

**CAUSES, REACTIONS, AND CONSEQUENCES OF BURNOUT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Psychological</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational</strong></td>
<td>Emotional exhaustion</td>
<td>Withdraw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of rewards</td>
<td>Depersonalisation</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of control</td>
<td></td>
<td>Friction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Declining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of support</td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td>Low Personal</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealistic expectations</td>
<td>Accomplishment</td>
<td>Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>Poor health.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pines and Aronson (1988)^42 are careful to distinguish between stress and burnout: Stress, in and of itself, does not cause burnout. People are often able to flourish in stressful, demanding careers if they feel valuable and appreciated and that their work has significance. They burn out when their work has no meaning and stress continuously outweighs support and reward (p. 11).

Pines and Aronson present a model with two major pathways. Their model, shown in the figure below, is a simplified version. The model suggests that two possibilities are likely to occur in a high-stress working environment. Burnout weakens motivation, while the sense of significance and success strengthens it.
One of the main causes of burnout is overwork brought on by the bureaucratic demand for both quantity and quality in work performance. They ask, Why does overload cause burnout? Because overload puts people in situations in which failure is built-in. If they comply with the bureaucratic demand for quantity (see a new patient every 20 minutes), they fail the demand for quality service. If they spend the time needed to do the work the way it should be done (which in some cases may mean seeing a patient for 40 minutes), they are sure to fail the demand for quantity. This failure is particularly devastating for people who care deeply about their work, and for whom success at work is a prerequisite for finding meaning in life (p. 104).

4.15.10. PRESSURE AND ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Stress can actually increase people’s performance. Instead of wilting under stress, one can use it as an impetus to achieve success. Stress can stimulate one's faculties to delve deep into and discover one's true potential. Under stress the brain is emotionally and bio-chemically stimulated to sharpen its performance.

A major consequence of the rapidly changing global scene is the increased pace workers are required to maintain to ensure maximum productivity and enhance competitiveness. In addition to the need to maintain high organisational performance,
there is a requirement for workers to perform multiple tasks in the workplace to keep abreast of changing technologies (Cascio, 1995; Quick, 1997). These organisational changes have been found to be potentially detrimental to workers’ health. Indeed, recent research has found performance pressure in professionals to be one of the most stressful aspects of their work (Cahn et al., 2000). Other studies have highlighted concerns regarding the changing nature of work and its link to an increased risk of injury and illness (Babson, 1993; Townley, 2000).

In this regard, a recent survey of managers in the United Kingdom indicated that the majority were unhappy with the current workplace culture where they were required to work extended hours and cope with large workloads while simultaneously meeting production targets and deadlines (Townley, 2000). The results of this study highlighted a range of stress-related symptoms including excessive tiredness, headaches and a loss of temper as being associated with such workplace demands. Further studies have established an association between increased working hours and impoverished family and social life (Cahn et al., 2000), thus exacerbating the impact of work stress. Many organisations subject their workers to further ‘performance pressure’ by monitoring their activities and/or output in the workplace. In order to maintain and enhance productivity, workers often find their work practices scrutinised by others on the team. Monitoring and/or surveillance of the worker are rapidly becoming a well-accepted procedure in many occupations. In the past, only a few occupations were monitored (predominantly telephone operators to check the quality of the service provided), however, the trend has now embraced a range of occupations and a plethora of service industries (Humphrey, 1998). The impact of such monitoring is a sense of pervasiveness among employees, a loss of the freedom to interact with co-workers and receive support, reduced co-operation, increased mistrust, and more competitiveness among co-workers. A potential consequence of practices for the worker is the increased likelihood of experiencing work-related stress.

4.15.11. STRESS REDUCTION INTERVENTIONS

Recognising that perceptions of occupational stress are as important as the actual event precipitating that stress, it is necessary to intervene in these perceptions. Greenberg (1990) offers the following suggestions:
1. Look for the humour in your stressors at work. A resourceful teacher, frustrated by unanimous from the principal with which she was repeatedly harassed, kept a file of these memos and eventually wrote a very humorous and successful book based upon them.

2. Try to see things for what they really are. Publishers are notorious for requesting manuscripts from authors by certain firm deadlines. Unfortunately, too often these manuscripts sit on some editor's desk before being processed. Publishers' deadlines are not really deadlines. Rather, they are dates close to when they would like to receive a manuscript and, knowing that many authors will be late with their submissions; these editors have selected dates with a margin for delay.

3. Distinguish between need and desire. "I must get this task completed" might be more truthfully stated as "I wish I could get this task completed".

4. Separate your self-worth from the task. If you fail at a task, it does not mean you are a failure.

5. Identify situations and employ the appropriate style of coping.

4.15.11.1. PRIMARY PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

Primary prevention strategies can be either reactive or proactive. Reactive strategies seek to identify and alter potential stress-provoking aspects of the workplace or workers, whereas proactive strategies are more likely to create working environments that are not stress-provoking. These proactive strategies tend to focus on workplaces rather than workers and, as such, have a greater likelihood of success. Despite the advantages of proactive primary stress management, there are several reasons why the focus has tended to be on individual-focused interventions. Firstly, pro-active approaches are often considered by management to be expensive to implement and disruptive to production schedules.

Prevention strategies are not effective for the entire working population and therefore support is needed for people who do develop mental health problems while
working to retain their employment. It seems that this gap is resulting in an increasing numbers of people losing employment due to mental illness, becoming dependant on incapacity Benefits, and losing a crucial source of self-esteem and self-identity.

4.15.12. DEMAND-INDUCED STRAIN COMPENSATION MODEL

De Jonge and Dormann (2003)\textsuperscript{44} developed a new model of job stress. This model, the so-called Demand-Induced Strain Compensation (DISC) Model, tries to unify principles that are common to both models, and thus create a more cohesive theoretical model of job stress.

4.15.12. DEMAND-INDUCED STRAIN COMPENSATION MODEL

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The DISC Model is premised on four key principles. Firstly, De Jonge and Dormann (2003) emphasise the need to recognise the multi-dimensionality of concepts. They observe that job demands, job resources, and job-related strains each contain cognitive, emotional, and physical elements. In the domain of job stress, stressful stimuli can be categorised under two main categories: job demands and job resources (Frese & Zapf, 1994; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Job demands refer to the degree to which the work environment contains stimuli that require sustained cognitive, emotional and/or physical effort (cf. Jones & Fletcher, 1996).

Job resources are conceptually similar to coping options; they can be broadly conceptualised as a kind of energetic reservoir that is tapped when the individual has to cope with stressful stimuli (cf. Hobfoll, 1989; 2002). However, although job resources “power up” stress responses, individuals — when confronted with job stress — strive to minimise the net loss of resources. In addition, when workers are not confronted with job demands, they strive to develop resource surpluses in order to offset the possibility of future loss (“energy accumulating behaviour”; cf., Hobfoll, 1989). As both job demands and job resources are multi-dimensional constructs, they may basically comprise cognitive, emotional and/or physical components.

As far as job demands are concerned, three types can be distinguished: (1) cognitive demands that impinge primarily on the brain processes involved in information processing (Hockey, 2000); (2) emotional demands which refer primarily to the effort needed to deal with organisationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions (Morris & Feldman, 1996); and (3) physical demands that are primarily associated with the musculo-skeletal system (i.e. motoric and physical aspects of behavior; cf. Hockey, 2000). Similarly, job resources may have a cognitive-informational component (e.g., colleagues providing information), an emotional component (e.g., colleagues providing sympathy and affection), and a physical component such as instrumental help of colleagues or ergonomic aids (cf. Cohen & Wills, 1985; Cutrona & Russell, 1990).
Stress is a tension that is created when a person responds to the demands and pressures that come from work or family and other external sources as well as those that are internally generated from self-imposed demands, obligations and self-criticism. Stress Management can be complicated and confusing because there are different types of stress—acute stress, episodic acute stress, and chronic stress—each of its own characteristics, symptoms, duration and treatment.
This model describes the management strategies that are being considered within this particular study in association with other simulations.


This chapter clearly presented the conceptual frame work of stress and the prevailing scenario of stress management in the industry.
References:


