Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework
2.1 CONCEPT OF BURNOUT

The first and the most basic question to consider is: what do we mean by the term "Burnout". The current popularity of the concept is a major barrier to defining it, for it has become an appealing label for many different phenomenon. It has come to mean different things to different people.

Although "Burnout" is a byword to many people, it is viewed as a buzzword by others. Freudenberger\(^1\) introduced the term "Burnout" in 1974 to refer to a phenomenon which he had observed in himself and in coworkers in free clinic movement. He denotes "Burnout" a state of physical and emotional depletion that results from conditions of work.

He defined "Burnout", “as to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources”, and attributed it to the unceasing pressures of working with emotionally needy and demanding individuals.

He also contends that an expected outcome of "Burnout" is often

identified by a set of characteristics which he describes as workaholism. His premise is that individuals will attempt to compensate for lack of productivity when burned out by putting more time and effort into their work exhibiting characteristics termed workaholic.

According to Freudenberger, "Burnout" manifests itself in many different symptomatic ways which vary in symptom and degree from person to person. It usually occurs about one year after someone has begun working in an institution, because it is just about at that point that a number of factors begin to come into play. One of the chief preludes to Burnout seems to be the "loss of charisma of the leader", and the let down of the clinic with this appointment. He divided symptoms of Burnout into two groups:

i) **The Physical Signs of Burnout**

The physical signs of "Burnout" are easy to spot. For one, there is a feeling of exhaustion and fatigue, being unable to shake a lingering cold, suffering from frequent headaches and gastrointestinal disturbances, sleeplessness and shortness of breath. In short, one becomes too somatically involved with one's bodily functions.

ii) **The Behavioural Signs of Burnout**

A staff member's quickness to anger and his instantaneous irritation and frustration responses are the signs of Burnout. The Burnout candidate finds it just too difficult to hold in feelings. He cries too easily,
the slightest pressure makes him feel overburdened and he yells and screams. He becomes excessively rigid, stubborn, and inflexible. Another behavioural indicator of Burnout is the totally negative attitude that gets verbalized. The person looks, acts and seems depressed.

As defined in "Longman Dictionary of Psychology and psychiatry"\(^2\), "Burnout" is "a vague term for exhaustion or failure, especially in one's job or career. The term is mainly applied to middle aged persons who perform at a high level until Stress and tension take their toll." While "Macmillan Dictionary of Psychology"\(^3\) defines "Burnout" as "Emotional exhaustion, sometimes accompanied by depression, caused by attempting to help mentally disordered people or others under severe Stress".

Maslach\(^4\) opines that "Burnout" is a loss of concern for the people with whom one is working in response to job related work". Lesson\(^5\) defines "Burnout" as "a phenomenon in which professionals loose energy and enthusiasm for their jobs". Idealism changes into practicability,

workers begin to depersonalize the clients they are helping. Burnout progresses until employees, disillusioned by feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability, may leave their jobs or profession.

Brill\textsuperscript{6} thinks "Burnout" as "an expectationally mediated, job related, dysphoric and dysfunctional state in an individual without major psychopathology who has:

- functional for a time at adequate performance and affectual levels in the same job situation and who
- will not recover to previous levels without outside help or environmental rearrangement.

Two types of definitions- expectations of reality and-expectations of self as real self.

"Burnout" should not be confused with marital problems, depression, transition, or pathology. Stress can be lead to Burnout but not all who are Stressed are burned out.

Maslach and Jackson\textsuperscript{7} are influential authors in the field, and they have delineated three aspects of Burnout: emotional exhaustion, dehumanization and negative self-evaluation. Maslach a psychologist

\textsuperscript{6} Brill, Peter L. The Need for an Operational Definition of Burnout. International Psychological Abstract, Vol.71(7–9), 1984, p.2619.

specializing in Burnout is of the opinion that people are turning to strangers in the form of institutions for help with their problems. The professional grow cynical and no longer has a positive feeling, sympathy or respect for clients. So, the institutions effectiveness is reduced as its line people deteriorate absenteeism, alcoholism, increased sick leave and finally resignation with some leaving the profession entirely.

Le-Roy Spaniol\(^8\) a professional "Burnout" authority defines it as "wearing out to the point of being unable to cope with the Stresses of work or life. Especially vulnerable are those professionals who work continuously on one to one basis with people, often on an adverse basis.

Carroll and White\(^9\) state that "Burnout" is a construct used to explain observable decrements in the typical quality and quantity of work performed by a person on the job. They proposed an ecological perspective of "Burnout". They argue that since "Burnout" is work-related concept, the work environment generally receives considerable attention; however other environments or ecosystems also play an important role in determining whether or not, to what degree and in what fashion a person will experience "Burnout".

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Deriving their assumptions about "Burnout" primarily from personal experiences with the syndrome, from co-workers, and previous studies, Caroll and White listed the following assumptions of "Burnout".

i) Burnout is caused by prolonged exposure to Stress and frustration. All personal and environmental factors that generate Stress and frustration for humans must be considered as potential causes of Burnout.

ii) Burnout is a holistic or psychobiosocial concept.

iii) The quality of interpersonal relationships that distinguish the work environment and other ecosystems of the worker is especially important to consider.

iv) Recognition of Burnout signs in the individual depend as much on the sign's origin, severity, and duration, and the observer's theoretical orientation to Burnout, his or her experience and sensitivity to Burnout and the honesty of the observer.

v) Signs of Burnout occur slowly, overtime with ever increasing severity.

vi) Burnout is a process not an event.

vii) Burnout occurs in varying degree for the individual, varying from relatively mild distractions and energy loss to serious and debilitating illness that may result in death.

viii) Signs of Burnout vary with duration of Burnout and with respect to
their consistency and intensity.

ix) Burnout may be experienced more than once by the same individual.

x) A worker’s awareness of his/her Burnout status and concomitant decrement in the quantity and quality of worker performance may vary from complete denial to nearly fully consciousness of the experience.

xi) Burnout can be infectious.

xii) Burnout is especially common and severe among professionals who deliver direct care and assistance to emotionally distressed indigent clients in public institutions or agencies.

xiii) When the aggregate levels of Stress and frustration among workers within the work environment prevents the completion of tasks essential to the primary mission/purpose of the organization, the organization itself may be described as burned out.

xiv) Certain characteristics as shared by all Burned out workers and organizations. However, some aspects of the Burnout process are unique to particular persons, work sites, and organizations.

xv) There is no known personality trait or personality configuration that, in and of itself, will cause someone to Burnout, but some personality characteristics may make someone more vulnerable of Burnout.
xvi) Burnout is not a disease even though physical disorders may arise as a consequence of Burnout.

xvii) Burnout is more likely to occur among highly motivated workers than among less motivated.

xviii) Burnout may lead to subsequent personal and professional growth and development, as well as greater despair and trauma.

Harris\textsuperscript{10} say, the organizational "Burnout" involves the potential for burning out of employees. Feelings associated with Burnout are helplessness, hopelessness disenchantment and emotional exhaustion. Attitudes and behaviours are manifested in negativism, inflexibility, and powerlessness. On the other hand Zastrow\textsuperscript{11} suggest the "Burnout" is caused by two types of factors mainly: distressing events and certain kind of self defeating thought about distressing events.

Burke \textit{et al.}\textsuperscript{12} say that "Burnout" is also correlated with numerous self reported measures of personal distress such as psychosomatic symptoms, less job satisfaction, marital and family problems and drug use.


\textsuperscript{11} Zastrow, Charles. Understanding and Preventing Burnout. Psychological Abstract, Vol.72(4-6), 1985, p.10643.

Pines and Aronson\textsuperscript{13} refer to "Burnout" as "physical, emotional, and mental (i.e. attitudinal) exhaustion".

Gillespie and Cohen\textsuperscript{14} contended that causes of worker "Burnout" are:

i) Overload responsibilities.

ii) Lack of recognition.

iii) Poor communications.

The three categories point out to workers dissatisfaction with their supervisors as one of the major source of Burnout. According to Maslach and Jackson\textsuperscript{15}, "Burnout" is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that is frequently found in individuals who work with people. The first aspect refers to – the development of increased feelings of emotional exhaustion and fatigue by employees. The second aspect refers to the tendency for people to develop negative, cynical attitudes towards others. The third aspect refers to – the negative self evaluation which result in feeling lack of personal accomplishment.


After reviewing various definitions, Maslach concluded that "Burnout" is a transactional process consisting of the following stages –

i) An imbalance between resource and demand (Stress).
ii) Immediate, short term emotional response to this imbalance is characterized by feelings of anxiety, tension, fatigue and exhaustion (strain).
iii) A number of changes in attitudes and behaviour. Such as a tendency to treat clients in a detached and mechanical fashion.

"Burnout" thus refers to a transactional process consisting of job Stresses, work, strain and psychological accommodation. It represents a response to an intolerable works situation. The process begins when the workers experience strain and Stress that cannot be alleviated through active problem-solving. The changes in attitude and behaviour associated with "Burnout" provide a psychological escape and ensure that further Stress will not be added to the strain already being experienced.

In general, the greater and more chronic the Stress and the more helpless the worker is, to change the situation, the more likely will Burnout occur and more severe it will be. Typically, Burnout occurs whenever a person with inadequate Stress management and need 

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gratifying skills must work in a Stressful and need frustrating work environment. Thus, Burnout must be viewed as stemming from the interaction of debilitating individual and environmental factors that, together detract from a person's ability to do his or her work.

2.2 CONCEPT OF STRESS

What is "Stress"? In the simplest and most general sense, Lazarus\textsuperscript{17} says, "Stress occurs when there are demands on the person which tax or exceed his adjustive resources. Certain environmental conditions are noxious to the tissues of the body or to the normal integrated functions of these tissues. These are physical Stressors including extreme cold, heat, the invasion of the micro-organisms, and physical injuries certain environmental social conditions, on the other hand, can also be damaging. These are called psychosocial Stressors. Stress depends upon not only on the external conditions, but also on the vulnerabilities of the individual and the adequacy of his or her system of defenses – in effect, on the way the person or animal is constructed, psychologically or physiologically.

He further writes that the Stress emotions are complex disturbances that include three main components:

i) a subjective affect (such as feeling angry or afraid);

ii) action, or impulses to act in particular ways to resolve the difficulty
e.g. to attack the agent of harm, to flee or to avoid it, to restore
the lost person, as in grief; and

iii) physiological changes produced as part of the body's mobilization
for the action.

"Dictionary of Behavioural Science"\(^{18}\) describes Stress as "a
condition of physical or mental strain which produces changes in the
autonomic nervous system". While "Dictionary of key words in
Psychology"\(^{19}\) defines Stress as "a system of internal forces, organic or
psychological, tending to produce wear and tear on the body".

"Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical
Terms",\(^{20}\) defined the term Stress as "an force, applied to a system,
sufficient to cause strain or distortion in the system, or when very great,
to alter it into a new form. The term may be restricted to physical force,
physical systems, or extended to psychological forces and systems.

Ruch\(^{21}\) defines Stress as "a unpleasant emotional upheaval which
the individual experiences in response to frustration, any adverse

\(^{19}\) Dictionary of Key Words in Psychology by Bruno, Frank J. London : Routledge, 1986,
p.225.
\(^{20}\) Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical Terms : A Guide to
Selye\textsuperscript{22} says that "the Stress reaction is the body's non-specific way of dealing with certain kinds of internal and external agents: fatigue, cold, microbes, acid and anxiety. No one can live without experiencing some degree of Stress all the time."

He further suggests that the body goes through three rather distinct stages when Stressed:--

i) The alarm reaction, in which the body's defenses are mobilized by activity in the limbic system, the sympathetic system, and through secretion of adrenalin and non-adrenalin.

ii) The stage of resistance, which occurs if the Stress continues for very long. During this stage, the body itself tries to repair the damage that arousal causes while still defending itself.

iii) The stage of exhaustion, which comes about if the emergency continues for too long. During this stage, the body may use all of its available resources and fall into depression or die.

Norman Tallent\textsuperscript{23} defines Stress as "pressures that threaten the ability of the personality to continue to function adequately. Stress may


be psychological – such as too heavy a load of responsibility or interpersonal conflict – or it may be biological – such as excessive fatigue, illness, or the effect of drugs.

Weitz\textsuperscript{24} feels that Stress is "a stimulus variable, while Appley and Trumbell\textsuperscript{25} opine that Stress is probably best conceived as "a state of the total organism under extenuating circumstances rather than as an event in the environment".

According to Sells\textsuperscript{26}, Stress reactions are, by and large, a function of cognitive control rather than of emotions. This view seem to integrate the psychological and physical Stress phenomenon.

Usually the Stress arises under the following conditions:

\begin{itemize}
  \item[i)] The individual is called upon in a situation to respond to circumstances for which he has no adequate response available, the unavailability may be due to physical inadequacy; absence of the response in the individuals response repertoire, lack of training, equipment, or opportunity to prepare;
  \item[ii)] the consequences of failure to respond effectively are important to the individual. Personal involvement in situations can be defined in
\end{itemize}

terms of importance of consequences to the individual. Stress intensity depends upon the importance of an individual's involvement and individuals assessment of the consequence of his inability to respond effectively to the situation.

Pascal\textsuperscript{27} defines Stress in terms of "perceived environmental situation which threatens the gratification of needs.....".

"A Students Dictionary of Psychology\textsuperscript{28} defines Stress as "the effect on a person of being subjected to noxious stimulation, or the threat of stimulation, particularly when they are unable to avoid or terminate the condition." Major changes in one's life have been found to be a common source of Stress which leave people vulnerable to depression. Hans Selye has found similar physiological and psychological reactions to prolonged Stress regardless of the nature of the source. While Stress is unpleasant and often damaging, it is also recognized that it may be actively sought, and in an important source of motivation. The term is also sometimes used for the source of Stress but it would be better if such conditions were always 'Stressors'.

On the other hand "Longman Dictionary of Psychology and


\textsuperscript{28} A Students Dictionary of Psychology. New York : Universal Book Stall, 1996, p.188.
Psychiatry defines Stress as "a state of physical or psychological strain which imposes demands for adjustment upon the individual. Stress may be internal or environmental, brief or persistent. If excessive or prolonged, it may overtax the individual's resources and lead to breakdown of organized functioning, or decompensation. Types of situation that produce Stress include frustrations, deprivations, conflicts, and pressures, all of which may arise from internal or external sources. The term is also used to denote emphasis put on a word or thought in speaking or writing."

"International Encyclopedia of Psychology" explains that the Stress response consists of physiological arousal, subjective feelings of discomfort, and the behavioural changes people experience when they confront situations that they appraise as dangerous or threatening. Because exposure to extreme situational or chronic Stress causes emotional distress and may impair physical functioning, it is important to learn effective Stress coping strategies.

Strain et al. say, "Stress" is not a technical concept in our theory; instead it is a commonly used word referring to any of the following:

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technical concepts:

i) Objective misfit;

ii) Subjective misfit;

iii) A variable in the objective environment which is presumed to pose a threat to the person;

iv) A variable in the objective environment which the person perceives as threatening.

"Chronic Stress" refers to a relatively stable state of the environment or of person environment misfit; "Acute Stress" refers to a sudden increase in Stress. Persons suffering from neurosis or from severe psychological Stress shows somatic complaints including variety of symptoms such as sweating palms, upset stomach, loss of appetite, trouble sleeping, heart beating faster than usual.

According to "The Complete reference Encyclopedia"32 "Stress" in psychology, any event or situation that makes demands on person's mental or emotional resources." Stress can be caused by overwork, anxiety and exams, money or job security, unemployment, bereavement, poor relationships, marriage breakdown, sexual difficulties, poor living or working conditions, and constant exposure to loud noise. Many changes that are apparently 'for the better' such as being promoted at work, going

to new school, moving house, getting married, are also a source of Stress. Stress can be cause, or aggravate, physical illnesses, among them psoriasis, eczema, asthma, stomach and mouth ulcers. Apart from removing the resource of Stress, acquiring some control over it and learning to relax when possible are the best treatments.

"Companion Encyclopedia of Psychology"33 defines "Stress" operationally as "a complex of responses consisting of three broad components of behaviour:

i) Subjective or self-report (i.e. asking people how they feel);

ii) Overt motor behaviours measured by observing performance on certain tasks; and

iii) Physiological arousal involving primarily the sympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system, and measuring responses such as epinephrine and norepinephrine levels."

Cofer and Appley34 defines the term "Stress" as "the state of an organism where he perceives that his well-being (or integrity) is endangered and that he must divert all his energies to its protection."

Lazarus et al.\textsuperscript{35} opines that "Stress" is produced in two main ways: first, Stress has been produced by forcing subjects to fail in one way or another. Second, Stress has been produced by complicating the subject task.

The concept of Stress, long recognized in psychology and psychiatry, is enriched by Selye's\textsuperscript{36} findings of how life experiences affect the body. The closely related and sometimes overlapping, concepts of frustration, conflict, and danger share the property of having the capacity to induce Stress in the individual. Such influences if not adequately adjusted to, may cause damage to the organs, disease or death.

Further, to illustrate the extent of the range of Stress inducing influences, Selye identified, "such diverse agents as cold, heat, x-rays, adrenalin, insulin, tubercle bacilli, or muscular exercise." Psychological Stress induced by "such diverse agents" as a frustrated desire to obtain love and affection from parents, divorce an avoidance–avoidance conflict of the sort experienced by a person who is pained by an ailment but fears to consult a physician or by a person suffering a prolonged incapacitation as a result of an accident, may lead to various psychological and bodily effects. Psychologically, we may note such symptoms as anxiety,\textsuperscript{35}\textsuperscript{36}


depression, or psychosis. In bodily terms, psychological Stress may give rise to emotional changes, to muscular tenseness, to hand tremors, to blushing, and to sweating. The person may stutter or have difficulty getting out the first word. The heart may race or the stomach pain. Long range disease may be set in motion and acute disease (a heart-attack, for example) may be precipitated. Chronic fatigue often is the result of psychological Stress.

When Stressed, we prepare our bodies for fight or flight says, Powell and Enright. Powerful stimulants such as adrenalin are released into the blood stream, along with the thyroid hormones to increase metabolism and cholesterol to boost energy. These chemicals if released on long-term basis, can cause heart disease and strokes, exhaustion, weight loss, and hardening of the arteries. The most stressful sorts of experiences are such things, as death of a spouse, divorce or separation and personal injury or illness. Medium Stresses are taking on a major mortgage changing, one's line of work, or having more arguments with ones spouse. Lower level of Stresses are caused by a change in sleeping habits, social activities, or vacations.

Personality is also important. Particularly vulnerable to self-induced Stress are people with Type A behaviours – those who feel an

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intense sense of time urgency, inappropriate hostility, and aggression, always try to do two things at once, and who try to achieve goals without planning.

La–Greca\textsuperscript{38} defines Stress as "a mental and physical condition resulting from a perceived threat of danger and a pressure to remove it. It was suggested that an inappropriate attitude towards failure commonly causes Stress. Other causes of Stress were the belief that one is incompetent, the attempt to accomplish too much in too little time and a sensitivity to the psychology of others".

Srivastava and Naidu\textsuperscript{39} say, "Stress" is a general term applied to the pressures people feel in life. As a result of these pressures, employees develop various symptoms of Stress that can harm their job performance. Stress can be viewed as an environmental phenomenon arising out of the inadequate coping with environment demands on the part of the individual.

Each of us have some capacity to adjust to a wide variety of circumstances. Some of us are generally weaker or stronger. Srivastava opines, some of us are capable of making certain adaptations well and other adaptation not so well. Each of us may be said to have a certain

\textsuperscript{38} La–Greca, G. The Stress, You Make. Personal Journal, Vol.64(9), 1985, pp.42–47.
degree of ability to adapt to life. The usual stimulation of the individual does not call forth all this energy in making adjustments, but often, circumstances demand increased effort and make adaptation difficult. When such a situation disturbs the biological, psychological, or social state of a person, it is referred to as Stress. Stress may come from internal or external sources. It may be caused by pressures, conflict, frustration, or any delayed satisfaction of a need.

Caplan\(^\text{40}\) has explained Stress in terms of matching the needs and values of a person with the environmental supplies and opportunities to meet these needs and values and also the matching of the demands of the environment and the abilities of the person to meet the demands.

Selye\(^\text{41}\) has defined it using two approaches –

i) **Stimulus Oriented Approach** – Under this approach Stress is considered an external force which is perceived as threatening. Any external event or any internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium is Stress.

ii) **Response Oriented Stress** – This approach describes Stress in terms of the reaction of an individual to Stress or how an individual


functions when under Stress. As a response it has been defined as a non-specific response to a situation which demands that the individual adapt to the change physically or psychologically.

On the basis of a review of literature it has been concluded by Mason\textsuperscript{42} that there is a lack of consensus regarding the definition of Stress. The term Stress has been explained in terms of, "a stimulus (external force acting on the organism), a response (changes in the physiological functions), an interaction (interaction between an external force and resistance to it) or a combination of all the above three.