2.1 INTRODUCTION

“When we meet real tragedy in life, we can react in two ways – either by losing hope and falling into self-destructive habits or by using the challenge to find our inner strength”

- Dalai Lama XIV

Stress is known as the ‘silent killer’ all over the world. It has now become the inevitable part of human life. Everyone experiences stress, in some cases major stress, in many cases unprecedented levels of stress. It is the wear and tear on one’s body. Author Marilyn Manning (1997) says that stress is a by-product of pressures, changes, demands, and challenges that one faces every day. Stress is the psychological and physiological reaction that takes place when one perceives an imbalance in the level of demand placed on the capacity to meet that demand on individuals.

Many people today work long hours, face constant deadlines, and are subject to pressure to increase income while keeping costs in check. To do things faster and better, but with fewer people, is the goal of many enterprises today. An unfortunate effect of this trend is to put too much pressure on the results to achieve increased performance, higher profit, and faster growth. But stress, burnout, turnover, aggression, and other unpleasant side effects also occur. Thus, there appears little doubt that one of the major adverse influences on job performance, productivity, absenteeism, and turnover is the incidence of stress at work.

Demands for improved business competitiveness and lower operating costs have frequently led to the restructuring of organizations and reduction in staff levels. This has placed greater pressures on the remaining staff and resulted in growing number of health problems, work stress, and a less efficient work force.¹

As business environment and organizations grow more competitive and complex, stress at work is also bound to increase. Dr. Hans Selye (1956), one of the prominent psychologists of the twentieth century, undertook a breakthrough
study in the understanding and defining of stress. Stress, according to him is the “Single nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it”.

Stress is our body’s way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be caused by both good and bad experiences. When people feel stressed by something going on around them, their bodies react by releasing chemicals into the blood. These chemicals give people more energy and strength, which can be a good thing if their stress is caused by physical danger. But this can also be a bad thing if their stress is in response to something emotional and there is no outlet for this extra energy and strength. This chapter will discuss different causes of stress, how stress affects you, the difference between ‘good’ or ‘positive’ stress and ‘bad’ or ‘negative’ stress, and some common facts about how stress affects people.

The cost of stress is huge. It is devastating to the individual and damaging to the business at a time when the need to control business costs and ensure an effective and healthy workforce is greater than ever. Both managers and employees need to understand the effects of work stress, the relationship between stress and performance and the sources of stress within an organization. In order to ensure the health of workforce, reduction in occupational stress is a worthwhile time investment for managers and supervisors as it will only stand to improve productivity, morale and overall organizational climate.

### 2.2 DEFINITION OF STRESS

The word stress is derived from the Latin word "stringer", which means, "to draw tight".

Today’s modern world, which is said to be a world of achievements, is also a world of stress. Globalization, Rapid urbanization and the consequent erosion of age-old social systems, hi-tech gizmos, materialism, and consumerism simply aggravate the daily hassles that are so unavoidable. In today’s scenario majority of stress is due to factors governing intensive requirement to gain respect, money, importance, materialistic life, status, reputation, and comforts. Everyone’s increased expectations and today’s rapid pace of life means that people have to tolerate more pressure now than ever before. In-spite of
technology and other modern amenities, people get less sleep, have less time and are more stressed than they were a decade ago. Also modern communications, via mobile phones, e-mail and pagers make it progressively more difficult to escape for even a few hours of undisturbed peace and quiet. Any new technological gadget might have led to progress but has made work more intricate and put on “hold.” Let us understand the concept of stress. Some prominent definitions of Stress are as follows:

In medical terms, stress is described as, "a physical or psychological stimulus that can produce mental tension or physiological reactions that may lead to illness." When you are under stress, your adrenal gland releases corticosteroids, which are converted to cortisol in the bloodstream. Cortisol has an immune suppressive effect in your body.

According to Zimbardo (1988), “Stress can be defined as, the pattern of specific and nonspecific responses an organism makes to stimuli evenly that disturb its equilibrium and tax or exceed its ability to cope.”

Lazaras (1966) has defined stress as “a whole spectrum of factors stimulus, response, and cognitive appraisal of threat, coping styles and psychological defenses. Stress is caused by the internal or external demand that upset the balance of an individual and affects the physical and psychological well being.”

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), “The term stress is used to describe the individual’s response to pressure. Stress refers to the process by which individuals perceive and respond to environmental demands which they appraise as challenging or threatening.”

Kowalski, (2003) has defined stress as, “It is a process by which certain work demands evoke an appraisal process in which perceived demands exceed resources and result in undesirable physical, emotional, cognitive and social changes.”

Dr. Hans Selye (1956), one of the leading authorities on the concept of stress, described stress as “the rate of all wear and tear caused by life.”
Even as stress is unavoidable in today’s complex life, it is necessary for human life, as it assists us in achieving both work and personal goals. It is like a musical instrument when an optimum stress is needed to produce good music; loose wires would not produce the notes, and too much tautness might result in screeching.

Stress is not always necessarily harmful. Hans Selye (1956) said, "Stress is not necessarily something bad, it all depends on how you take it. The stress of exhilarating, creative successful work is beneficial, while that of failure, humiliation or infection is detrimental." Stress can be positive or negative:

A distinction has been made between productive or functional or good stress and dysfunctional or Negative stress. Stress or Good Stress is productive or functional and Negative Stress or distress is dysfunctional or non-productive (Naik, 2011).

Stress is good when the situation offers an opportunity to a person to gain something. It acts as a motivator for peak performance. Everyone needs some “good stress” i.e. Eu-stress to act as an impetus to meet up challenges in order to get the most out of life. The technical term for stress is ‘arousal.’ Although small amounts of stress have positive effects by stimulating people to achieve goals, excessive stress may seriously and pessimistically affect a person’s health leading to physical illness and psychological disorders and would also result in insufficient adaptation to situations and people’s failure to perform at an optimal level thereby affecting their job performances. However, excessive stress can make those goals harder to achieve.

Stress is negative when a person faces social, physical, organizational and emotional problems. Dys-stress results in feeling that the pressures in one’s life have become irresistible and one is no longer able to cope. It is this type of stress that people really mean when they say they are ‘stressed.’ If it is left unresolved, such stress can arise from a feeling of being crushed to becoming physically ill (Mathew et al., 2008).
2.3 BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TERM STRESS

Stress is not a useful term for scientists because it is such a highly subjective phenomenon that it defies definition. And if you can’t define stress, how can you possibly measure it? The term “stress”, as it is currently used was coined by Hans Selye in 1936, who defined it as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change”. Selye had noted in numerous experiments that laboratory animals subjected to acute but different noxious physical and emotional stimuli (blaring light, deafening noise, extremes of heat or cold, perpetual frustration) all exhibited the same pathologic changes of stomach ulcerations, shrinkage of lymphoid tissue and enlargement of the adrenals. He later demonstrated that persistent stress could cause these animals to develop various diseases similar to those seen in humans, such as heart attacks, stroke, kidney disease and rheumatoid arthritis. At the time, it was believed that most diseases were caused by specific but different pathogens. Tuberculosis was due to the tubercle bacillus, anthrax by the anthrax bacillus, syphilis by a spirochete, etc. What Selye proposed was just the opposite, namely that many different insults could cause the same disease, not only in animals but in humans as well.

Selye’s theories attracted considerable attention and stress soon became a popular buzzword that completely ignored Selye’s original definition. Some people used stress to refer to an overbearing or bad boss or some other unpleasant situation they were subjected to. For many, stress was their reaction to this in the form of chest pain, heartburn, headache or palpitations. Others used stress to refer to what they perceived as the end result of these repeated responses, such as an ulcer or heart attack. Many scientists complained about this confusion and one physician concluded in a 1951 issue of the British Medical Journal that, “Stress in addition to being itself, was also the cause of itself, and the result of itself.”

Unfortunately, Selye was not aware that stress had been used for centuries in physics to explain elasticity, the property of a material that allows it to resume its original size and shape after having been compressed or stretched by an external force. As expressed in Hooke’s Law of 1658, the magnitude of an external force, or stress, produces a proportional amount of deformation, or
strain, in a malleable metal. This created, even more, confusion when his research had to be translated into foreign languages. There was no suitable word or phrase that could convey what he meant since he was really describing strain. In 1946, when he was asked to give an address at the prestigious College de France, the academicians responsible for maintaining the purity of the French language struggled with this problem for several days and subsequently decided that a new word would have to be created. Apparently, the male chauvinists prevailed, and le stress was born, quickly followed by el stress, il stress, lo stress, der stress in other European languages, and similar neologisms in Russian, Japanese, Chinese and Arabic. Stress is one of the very few words you will see preserved in English in these and other languages that do not use the Roman alphabet.

Because it was apparent that most people viewed stress as some unpleasant threat, Selye subsequently had to create a new word, stressor, to distinguish stimulus from the response. Stress was generally considered as being synonymous with distress and dictionaries defined it as “physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension” or “a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.” Thus, stress was put in a negative light and its positive effects ignored. However, stress can be helpful and good when it motivates people to accomplish more.

Source: Nixon, P. Practitioner (1979)

Figure 2.1: Human Function Curve
Figure 2.1 explains the human function curve regarding stress. As illustrated to the left, increased stress results in increased productivity – up to a point, after which things go rapidly downhill. However, that point or peak differs for each of us, so you need to be sensitive to the early warning symptoms and signs that suggest a stress overload is starting to push you over the hump. Such signals also differ for each of us and can be so subtle that they are often ignored until it is too late.

Any definition of stress should therefore also include good stress, or what Selye called eustress. For example, winning a race or election can be just as stressful as losing.

Present Status

Major depressive disorder (MDD) is the most common psychiatric disorder. The Uni-polar depressive disorder is the fourth most common cause of disability in females, in all ages as per the Global Burden of Disease, 2000. The lifetime prevalence of MDD is 10–25% for women, and 5–12% for men. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), it is also the most important precursor of suicide and will be the second cause of Global Disease Burden by the year 2020, WHO states that the burden of depression is 50% higher for females than males and Indians are reported to be among the worlds most depressed. The prevalence of depression is 9%, of major depressive episode is 36%, and the average age of onset of depression is 31.9 years, in India. Depressive disorders affect almost 10% of the United States population with 2–3 times more females than male’s affected. The prevalence rates of depression from India range from 1.5/1000 to 37.74/1000. The higher rates of depression have been reported in the rural compared to the urban population.

2.4 TYPES OF STRESS

Today, the term stress can be used in different ways and for different purposes. If someone says they are under stress we all know what they mean and in this sense, we have come to view stress as a negative experience. However, many people are unaware that there are two separate categories of stress: eustress and distress.
**Eustress**

Eustress is perceived as a ‘beneficial stress’ or ‘adaptive stress,’ which motivates you to continue working on the task at hand. Eustress can be psychological or physical (i.e., physical activity). Eustress is an important component of everyday life, as good amounts of stress motivate us, encourages us to challenge ourselves, and encourages productiveness. Furthermore, eustress often provides a sense of fulfillment when a task is completed. The human body cannot physically differentiate between different types of stress; it is in fact how the individual perceives a certain stressor that results in the feeling of eustress or distress. That is, eustress is not a different type of stressor, it is a positive reaction to stress, which results in a desire to achieve and overcome an obstacle.

**Distress**

Distress, otherwise known as ‘bad stress,’ occurs when something becomes difficult for an individual to cope with. In extreme cases, distress can result in anxiety and/or depression. Distress causes tension to build within the body and mind, and the task at hand suddenly seems daunting. Furthermore, it may seem as though distress is never ending and often results in poor decision-making skills.

Distress may be further categorized into the following:

**2.4.1 Acute Stress**

Acute stress is the most common form of stress. It comes from demands and pressures of the recent past and anticipated demands and pressures of the near future. Acute stress is thrilling and exciting in small doses, but too much is exhausting. Acute stress is usually for short time and may be due to work pressure, meeting deadlines pressure or minor accident, overexertion, increased physical activity, searching something but you misplaced it, child's occasional problems at school or similar things. Because it is short-term, acute stress doesn't have enough time to do the extensive damage associated with long-term stress. Acute stress is common in people who take too many responsibilities and are overloaded or overworked, disorganized, always in a hurry and never in time.
These people are generally in positions of importance at their workplace and stressful lifestyle is inherent in them.

**Symptoms:** Acute stress has following symptoms:

i. **Emotional distress:** some combination of anger or irritability, anxiety and depression, the three stress emotions.

ii. **Muscular problems** including a tension headache, back pain, jaw pain and the muscular tensions that lead to pulled muscles and tendon and ligament problems.

iii. **Stomach, gut and bowel problems** such as heartburn, acid stomach, flatulence, diarrhea, constipation, and irritable bowel syndrome.

iv. **Transient over-arousal** leads to an elevation in blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms, heart palpitations, dizziness, migraine headaches, cold hands or feet, shortness of breath and chest pain.

Acute stress can crop up in anyone's life, and it is highly treatable and manageable.

**2.4.2 Episodic acute stress**

Episodic acute stress is the stress which affects those who suffer from acute stress more frequently. People that tend suffer from this always seem to be in a rush. They take too much on and tend not to be able to organize themselves to deal with demands and pressures. Episodic Acute stress can affect interpersonal skills and can make sufferers hostile towards others causing deterioration of relationships at home and at the workplace. Its symptoms include prolonged overstimulation, persistent tension, headaches or migraines, hypertension and chest pains.

It is common for people with acute stress reactions to be over aroused, short-tempered, irritable, anxious and tense. Often, they describe themselves as having "a lot of nervous energy." Always in a hurry, they tend to be abrupt, and sometimes their irritability comes across as hostility. Interpersonal relationships deteriorate rapidly when others respond with real hostility. The workplace becomes a very stressful place for them.
The cardiac prone, "Type A" personality described by cardiologists, Type A's have an "excessive competitive drive, aggressiveness, impatience, and a harrying sense of time urgency." In addition, there is a "free-floating, but a well-rationalized form of hostility, and almost always a deep-seated insecurity." Such personality characteristics would seem to create frequent episodes of acute stress for the Type A individual. Friedman and Rosenman\textsuperscript{20} found Type A's to be much more likely to develop coronary heart disease than Type B's, who show an opposite pattern of behavior.

Another form of episodic acute stress comes from ceaseless worry. "Worrywarts" see disaster around every corner and pessimistically forecast catastrophe in every situation. The world is a dangerous, unRewarding, punitive place where something awful is always about to happen. These "awfulizers" also tend to be over aroused and tense but are more anxious and depressed than angry and hostile.

**The symptoms of episodic acute stress are:**

The symptoms of episodic acute stress are extended over arousal: persistent tension headaches, migraines, hypertension, chest pain and heart disease.

Treating episodic acute stress requires intervention on a number of levels, generally requiring professional help, which may take many months. While acute stress can be thrilling and exciting, chronic stress is not. This is the grinding stress that wears people away day after day, year after year.

### 2.4.3 Chronic Stress

This type of stress is the most serious of all the 3 stress types. Chronic stress is a prolonged stress that exists for weeks, months or even years. This stress is due to poverty, broken or stressed families and marriages, chronic illness and successive failures in life. People suffering from this type of stress get used to it and may even not realize that they are under chronic stress. It is very harmful to their health.
Chronic stress destroys bodies, minds, and lives. It wreaks havoc through long-term attrition. It's the stress of poverty, of dysfunctional families, of being trapped in an unhappy marriage or in a despised job or career. Chronic stress comes when a person never sees a way out of a miserable situation. It's the stress of unrelenting demands and pressures for seemingly interminable periods of time. With no hope, the individual gives up searching for solutions.

Symptoms of chronic stress can vary from anxiety, depression, social isolation, headache, abdominal pain or lack of sleep to back pain and difficulty in concentrating. Other symptoms include panic attacks or a panic disorder. Chronic stress can increase an individual's risk for psychiatric disorders and some physical disorders, especially cardiovascular diseases.

Some chronic stresses stem from traumatic, early childhood experiences that become internalized and remain forever painful and present. Some experiences profoundly affect personality. A view of the world, or a belief system, is created that causes unending stress for the individual (e.g., the world is a threatening place, people will find out you are a pretender, and you must be perfect at all times). When personality or deep-seated convictions and beliefs must be reformulated, recovery requires active self-examination, often with professional help.

The worst aspect of chronic stress is that people get used to it. They forget it's there. People are immediately aware of acute stress because it is new; they ignore chronic stress because it is old, familiar, and sometimes, almost comfortable.

Chronic stress kills through suicide, violence, heart attack, stroke and, perhaps, even cancer. People wear down to a final, fatal breakdown. Because physical and mental resources are depleted through long-term attrition, the symptoms of chronic stress are difficult to treat and may require extended medical as well as behavioral treatment and stress management.
2.5 TYPES OF STRESSORS

Stressors are external events, including pressures in people's lives such as divorce, marriage, children, work, and money. The experience of stress, however, is related to how you respond to these stressors. One person's stressor can be another person's motivator. Stress factors broadly fall into four types or categories: physical stressors, psychological stressors, psychosocial stressors, and psycho-spiritual stress.

2.5.1 Physical Stressors:

Physical stressors produce mechanical stresses on skin, bones, ligaments, tendons, muscles, and nerves that cause tissue deformation and in extreme cases tissue failure. Chemical stresses also produce biomechanical responses associated with metabolism and tissue repair. Physical stressors may produce pain and impair work performance. Chronic pain and impairment requiring medical attention may result from extreme physical stressors or if there is not sufficient recovery time between successive exposures.

Examples: trauma (injury, infection, surgery), intense physical labor/over-exertion, environmental pollution (pesticides, herbicides, toxins, heavy metals, inadequate light, radiation, noise, electromagnetic fields), illness (viral, bacterial, or fungal agents), fatigue, inadequate oxygen supply, hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), hormonal and/or biochemical imbalances, dietary stress (nutritional deficiencies, food allergies and sensitivities, unhealthy eating habits), dehydration, substance abuse, dental challenges, and musculoskeletal misalignments/imbalance.

2.5.2 Psychological Stressors:

Any situation that produces an emotional response whether an actual experience or one that you perceive to be real is called a psychological stressor.
Psychological stress occurs when you are under pressure or having difficulty coping with a situation or stimulus.

**Examples:** emotional stress (resentments, fears, frustration, sadness, anger, grief/bereavement), cognitive stress (information overload, accelerated sense of time, worry, guilt, shame, jealousy, resistance, attachments, self-criticism, self-loathing, unworkable perfectionism, anxiety, panic attacks, not feeling like yourself, not feeling like things are real, and a sense of being out of control/not being in control), and perceptual stress (beliefs, roles, stories, attitudes, worldview).

### 2.5.3 Psychosocial Stressors:

Psychosocial stress is the result of a cognitive appraisal (your mental interpretation) of what is at stake and what can be done about it. More simply put, psychosocial stress results when we look at a perceived social threat in our lives (real or even imagined) and discern that it may require resources we don't have.

**Examples:** relationship/marriage difficulties (partner, siblings, children, family, employer, co-workers, employer), lack of social support, lack of resources for adequate survival, loss of employment/investments/savings, loss of loved ones, bankruptcy, home foreclosure, and isolation.

### 2.5.4 Psycho-spiritual Stressors:

Psycho-spiritual stress is a condition where normal stressful situations deeply affect the spiritual balance of the person. Most of the symptoms of this condition are related to psychological and emotional disorders.

**Examples:** A crisis of values, meaning, and purpose; joyless striving (instead of productive, satisfying, meaningful and fulfilling work; and a misalignment within one’s core spiritual beliefs.

Overall, improperly or ineffectively managed stress usually takes a toll on the body. When stress-related feelings, moods, emotions are pushed into the body, the soma, this is usually termed psychosomatic or psychogenic illness, including headaches, heart palpitations, physical/cognitive/emotional pain and
suffering, constricted throat and shallow, constricted breathing, clammy palms, fatigue, nausea, anxiety, allergies, asthma, autoimmune syndromes related to an ineffective functioning of the immune system, hypertension (high blood pressure), and gastrointestinal disturbances such as diarrhea, upset stomach, duodenal ulcers and esophageal reflux syndrome.

Prolonged stress can result in the suppressed immune function, increased susceptibility to infectious and immune-related diseases and cancer. Emotional stress can also result in hormonal imbalances (adrenal, pituitary, thyroid, and etcetera) that further interfere with healthy immune functioning.

2.6 JOB STRESS

Job stress comes in different forms and affects your mind and body in different ways. Small things can make one feel stressed, such as a copy machine that never seems to work when you need it or phones that won't quit ringing. Major stress comes from having too much or not enough work or doing work that doesn't satisfy you. Conflicts with your boss, coworkers, or customers are other major causes of stress.

It's normal to have some stress. Stress releases hormones that speed up your heart, make you breathe faster and give you a burst of energy. Stress can be useful when you need to focus on or finish a big project. But too much stress or being under stress for too long isn't good for you. Constant stress can make you more likely to get sick more often. It can make chronic pain worse and can also lead to long-term health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, back problems, and depression. Job stress can be of two types –

2.6.1 Work or Organization Stressors:

These stressors can be controlled by the employee himself and its organization. The major stressors in this category are:

Career Concern: If an employee feels that he is very much behind in the corporate ladder, then he may experience stress. If he seems that there are no opportunities for self-growth, he may experience stress. Hence, unfulfilled career expectations are the significant source of stress.
Role Ambiguity: It occurs when the person doesn't know what he is supposed to do, on the job. His tasks and responsibilities are not clear. The employee is not sure what he is expected to do. It creates confusion in the minds of the worker and results in stress.

Rotating Work Shifts: Stress may occur in those individuals who work on different work shifts. Employees may be expected to work on day shift for some days and then on the night shift. That may create problems in adjusting to the shift timings, and it can affect not only personal life but also the family life of the employee.

Role Conflict: It takes place when people have different expectations from the person performing a particular role. It can also occur if the job is not as per expectation, or when a job demands a certain type of behaviour that is against the person's moral values.

Occupational Demands: Some jobs are more demanding than others. Jobs that involve risk and danger are more stressful. Research findings indicate a job that causes stress needs constant monitoring of equipment and devices, unpleasant physical conditions, making decisions, etc.

Lack of Participation in Decision-making: Many experienced employees feel that management should consult them on matters affecting their jobs. In reality, the superiors hardly ask the concerned employees before taking a decision. That develops a feeling of being neglected, which may lead to stress.

Work Overload: Excessive workload leads to stress as it puts a person under tremendous pressure. Work overload may take two different forms:

- Qualitative work overload implies performing a job that is complicated or beyond the employee's capacity.
- Quantitative work overload is a result of many activities performed in a prescribed time.

Work Under load: In this case, too little work or very easy work is expected on the part of the employee. Doing less work or jobs of routine and simple nature would lead to monotony and boredom, which can lead to stress.
**Poor Working Conditions:** Employees may be subject to poor working conditions. It would include bad lighting and ventilation, unhygienic sanitation facilities, excessive noise, and dust, the presence of toxic gasses and fumes, inadequate safety measures, etc. All these unpleasant conditions create a physiological and psychological imbalance in humans thereby causing stress.

**Lack of Group Cohesiveness:** Every group is characterized by its cohesiveness, although they differ widely in its degree. Individuals experience stress when there is no unity among workgroup members. There are mistrust, jealousy, frequent quarrels, etc., in groups and this lead to stress in employees.

**Interpersonal and Intergroup Conflict:** These conflicts take place due to differences in perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs between two or more individuals and groups. Such conflicts can be a source of stress for group members.

Image credits © Gaurav Akrani.

**Figure 2.2 Work or Organizational Stressors**
Organizational Changes: When changes occur, people have to adapt to those changes, and this may cause stress. Stress is higher when changes are significant or unusual like transfer or adoption of new technology.

Lack of Social Support: When individuals believe that they have the friendship and support of others at work, their ability to cope with the effects of stress increases. If this kind of social support is not available, then an employee experiences more stress.

Other Reasons: Such as being unhappy in your job, being insecure about your chance for advancement or risk of termination, having to give speeches in front of colleagues etc.

2.6.2 Social Stressors:

Certain factors are outside the scope of an organization. These can also cause stress and are known as Social Stressors. The main causes of stress outside work or organization are described as follows:

Civic Amenities: Poor civic amenities in the area in which one lives can be a cause of stress. Inadequate or lack of public facilities like improper water supply, excessive noise or air pollution, lack of proper transport facility can be quite stressful.

Life Changes: Life changes can bring stress to a person. Life changes can be slow or sudden. Gradual life changes include getting older, and abrupt life changes include death or accident of a loved one. Sudden life changes are highly stressful and very difficult to cope.

Frustration: Frustration is another cause of stress. It arises when goal-directed behavior gets blocked. Management should attempt to remove barriers and help the employees to reach their goals.

Racial, Caste, and Religious Conflicts: Employees living in areas, which are often prone to conflicts among people based on differences seen in their race, caste and religion do suffer more from stress. In the case of a religion, the minorities and lower-caste people (especially in India) are subject to more stress.
**Personality:** We can classify people as ‘Type A’ and ‘Type B’.

The ‘Type A’ people:

- They feel guilty while relaxing.
- They get irritated by minor mistakes of self and others.
- They feel impatient and dislike waiting.
- They are also multitasking and prefer to do several things at one time.

The ‘Type B’ people are exactly opposite and hence are less affected by stress due to the above factors.

**Technological Changes:** When there are any changes in technical fields, employees are under the constant fear of losing jobs or need to adjust to new technologies. It can be a source of stress.

![Figure 2.3 Social Stressors](image-credits)

**Career Changes:** When a person suddenly switches to another job, he is under stress to shoulder new responsibilities adequately. Under-promotion, over-promotion, demotion, and transfers can also cause stress.
2.7 **CONSEQUENCES OF LONG-TERM STRESS**

When you are in a stressful situation, your body launches a physical response. Your nervous system springs into action, releasing hormones that prepare you to either fight or take off. It's called the "fight or flight" response, and it's why, when you're in a stressful situation, you may notice that your heartbeat speeds up, your breathing gets faster, your muscles tense, and you start to sweat. This kind of stress is short-term and temporary (acute stress), and your body usually recovers quickly from it.

But if your stress system stays activated over a long period of time (chronic stress), it can lead to more serious health problems. The constant rush of stress hormones can put a lot of wear and tear on your body, causing it to age more quickly and making it more prone to illness. A little stress every now and then is not something to be concerned about.

**Health-Related Problems**

Ongoing, chronic stress, however, can cause or exacerbate many serious health problems, including:

- Mental health problems, such as Headache, Fatigue, Difficulty in sleeping, Difficulty in concentrating, depression, anxiety, and personality disorders
- Cardiovascular disease, including heart disease, high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, heart attacks, and stroke, Hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis), Heartburn, ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome
- Obesity and other eating disorders, Gastrointestinal problems, such as GERD, gastritis, ulcerative colitis, and irritable colon, Upset stomach -- cramps, constipation, and diarrhea, Weight gain or loss
- Menstrual problems
- Sexual dysfunction, such as impotence and premature ejaculation in men and loss of sexual desire in both men and women, Fertility problems
- Skin and hair problems, such as acne, psoriasis, and eczema, and permanent hair loss
- Flare-ups of asthma or arthritis
**Behaviour Related Problems**

When stress becomes unmanageable, it can wreak havoc on everything from your diet to your relationships. In following ways both short- and long-term stress affect your daily behavior:

1. Ending by making bad decisions
2. Acting irritable
3. Having harder time achieving goals
4. More likely to behave unethically
5. Willing to work harder for a reward, even though you don't necessarily like it more.
6. Taking greater risks
7. Lack of Punctuality and Absenteeism
8. Accidents
9. Eating junk food
10. Less inclined to exercise
11. More forgetful
12. An ill temper, often annoyed or easily angry
13. Biting or picking your nails or the skin around your fingers
14. Grinding your teeth or biting the inside of your mouth
15. Rapid speaking
16. Overeating or under-eating
17. Chain smoking
18. Touching you face constantly or twisting your hair
19. Suicidal talk or behaviour
2.8 COPING STRATEGIES

Coping refers to the thoughts and actions we use to deal with a threatening situation. Coping is a very complex process that varies according to many variables such as the situation, the evaluation of the situation, and the resources available.

Coping mechanisms are the strategies people often use in the phase of stress and/or trauma to help manage difficult and/or painful emotions. Coping mechanisms can help people adjust to stressful events while maintaining their emotional well-being.

Some may confuse defense mechanisms with coping mechanisms. Although they share some similarities, they are, in fact, different. Defense mechanisms mostly occur at an unconscious level, and people are generally unaware they are using them. One’s use of coping mechanisms, on the other hand, is typically conscious and purposeful. Coping mechanisms are used to manage an external situation that is creating problems for an individual. Defense mechanisms can change a person’s internal psychological state.

A stressful situation may be considered a threat for you but not necessarily for your neighbor. You and your neighbor may become stressed by the same situation, but for different reasons (e.g. The situation is new for you but unpredictable for your neighbor).

After all, since we all become stressed for various reasons we will need to choose different coping strategies. As you will see, there are many strategies and some are better than others.

Coping styles can be problem-focused—also called instrumental—or emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping strategies are typically associated with methods of dealing with the problem in order to reduce stress, while emotion-focused mechanisms can help people handle any feelings of distress that result from the problem.
**Problem-focused strategy**

This strategy relies on using active ways to directly tackle the situation that caused the stress: you must concentrate on the problem. Here are some examples:

- Analyze the situation e.g. Pay attention, avoid taking on more responsibility than you can manage.
- Work harder e.g. Stay up all night to study for an exam
- Apply what you have already learned to your daily life. e.g. You lose your job for the second time - you now know the steps to apply for a new job
- Talk to a person that has a direct impact on the situation e.g. Talk directly to your boss to ask for an extension to the project that is due in one week.

**Emotion-focused strategy**

Emotion-focused coping strategies are used to handle feelings of distress, rather than the actual problem situation. You focus on your emotions:

- Brood e.g. you accept new tasks instead of saying “no”, but you keep complaining and saying it is unfair.
- Imagine/Magic thinking e.g. you dream about a better financial situation.
- Avoid/Deny e.g. you avoid everything that is related to this situation or you take drugs and/or alcohol to escape from this situation.
- Blame e.g. you blame yourself or others for the situation.
- Social support e.g. you talk to your best friend about your concerns.

Further, coping mechanisms can be broadly categorized as active or avoidant. Active coping mechanisms usually involve an awareness of the stressor and conscious attempts to reduce stress. Avoidant coping mechanisms, on the other hand, are characterized by ignoring or otherwise avoiding the problem.

Some coping methods, though they work for a time, are not effective for a long-term period. These ineffective coping mechanisms, which can often be counterproductive or have unintended negative consequences, are known as...
“maladaptive coping.” Adaptive coping mechanisms are those generally considered to be healthy and effective ways of managing stressful situations.

Among the more commonly used coping mechanisms are:

**Support:** Talking about a stressful event with a supportive person can be an effective way to manage stress. Seeking external support instead of self-isolating and internalizing the effects of stress can often greatly reduce the negative effects of a difficult situation.

**Relaxation:** Any number of relaxing activities can help people cope with stressful situations. Relaxing activities may include practicing meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, or calming techniques; sitting in nature; or listening to soft music etc.

**Problem-solving:** This coping mechanism involves identifying a problem that is causing stress and then developing and putting into action some potential solutions for effectively managing it.

**Humor:** Humor is a very effective, simple and inexpensive way to decrease stress. Humor is effective as a stress-relieving method for numerous reasons. First, humor functions as a distraction, interrupting the chain of thought that results in stress. Effective humor also results in laughter, which is a physical release of tension.

**Physical activity:** Exercise can serve, for many people, as a natural and healthy form of stress relief. Running, yoga, swimming, walking, dance, team sports, and many other types of physical activity can help people cope with stressful situations and the after-effects of traumatic events.

### 2.9 STRESS IN WOMEN

Women, especially in India, are socialized to be the caretakers of others. More women than men have both a career outside the home and continue to try to juggle traditional responsibilities after hours. Over 70% of married women with children are employed outside the home. Sociologists describe women as struggling to achieve the "male standards" at work while trying to maintain the perfect wife and mother standards at home.24
There are also substantial discrepancies in how stress impacts women’s health as compared to men's. Studies have found that women differ from men not only in their emotional responses to stress but also that acute and chronic stress may take a greater toll on women’s' physical and mental health. Women are also less likely to be in as powerful positions as men to change their environment. Women find it harder to say no to others' requests and often feel guilty if they can't please everyone. They often spend less time nurturing their own emotional and physical needs, as that might be perceived as selfish. In addition, relationship alterations or the loss of loved ones can produce emptiness or other separation syndromes.

As women progress through life's stages, the hormonal balance associated with premenstrual, post-partum and menopausal changes can affect chemical vulnerability to stress and depression. When reacting to stressors, the body releases hormones such as cortisol, which is known to impact the immune system, digestive system, skin and more -- and cortisol responses to psychological stress have also been shown to differ between men and women. Stress can affect nearly every system in the body, and it may be undermining your health in more ways than you realize. In women, these hormonal changes impact bodily processes in unique ways, which can lead to short-term and long-term health problems.

Women are twice more likely to experience major depression than men. They are also up to three times more apt to suffer from anxiety disorders or to attempt suicide. The reasons for these gender differences are not clear, and some believe such statistics are exaggerated because females are more “sensitive” and therefore more likely to report such symptoms. On the other hand, a variety of observations tend to confirm that these disparities are valid, such as the following half dozen.

1. Hormonal differences are usually cited as the major explanation. Compared to men, women experience much more fluctuation in hormone levels that are associated with symptoms of depression. In addition to premenstrual dysphoric disorder, up to 15% experience postpartum
depression. Women are also more apt to suffer from hypothyroidism, which is often associated with depression.

2. Women have a stronger genetic predisposition for depression than men based on identical and fraternal twin studies, as well as documented and detailed family history records.

3. Women tend to be more involved in personal relationships than men and suffer more when they are disrupted. More, married women and housewives have increasingly entered the workforce and find it difficult to juggle job and family responsibilities, such as caring for an elderly relative.

4. Women live longer than men and extreme old age is often associated with bereavement, loneliness, poor physical health, and other factors that predispose to depression.

5. Women are more likely than men to consult a physician if they do not feel well or have symptoms of depression, and are therefore more likely to be diagnosed. There is also some evidence that both males, as well as female physicians, are more apt to make a diagnosis of depression in women than men with identical complaints.

6. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD syndrome) is four times more common in women than men, and its incidence increases the farther away you live from the Equator.

Men and women report different reactions to stress, both physically and mentally. They attempt to manage stress in very different ways and also perceive their ability to do so — and the things that stand in their way — in markedly different ways. Findings suggest that while women are more likely to report physical symptoms associated with stress, they are doing a better job connecting with others in their lives and, at times, these connections are important to their stress management strategies²⁷.

According to “Women of Tomorrow,” a recent Nielsen²⁸ survey of 6,500 women across 21 different nations, Indian women are the most stressed in the
world today. An overwhelming 87% of Indian women said they felt stressed most of the time, and 82% reported that they had no time to relax. The Nielsen survey’s respondents blame the difficulty of juggling multiple roles at home and work. Career opportunities for women in “the New India” are rapidly expanding, but family expectations and social mores remain rooted in tradition. Not surprisingly, the highest amount of stress is felt among women between 25 and 55 years of age, who are trying to balance demanding careers with obligations at home. Traditional family structures have a disproportionate effect on Indian women, even those who are urban, college-educated professionals, and especially for those who are the first generation in their families to have a career. Indian women are pulled by demands from relatives as they attempt to conform to the paradigm of “ideal daughter,” “ideal wife,” and “ideal daughter-in-law.” Among the many interviews conducted in researching the book, it wasn’t at all rare to hear of successful professionals who woke up at 4:30 a.m. to make breakfast and lunch for children and parents-in-law, put in a full day at work, then returned home to clean up after the extended family and prepare dinner.

2.10 STRESS IN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The Stress of women entrepreneurs is the focal point of present research. Women entrepreneurs work hard raising funds to live and making things at home, without regular hours, job descriptions, and employee benefits. Instead, they put in long hours of work on shifting clusters of tasks on a schedule set by the needs of the day. It was the industrial revolution and the creation of large manufacturing organizations that created conditions for the emergence of 'work'. In a fast-moving economy, work is rigid solutions to the elastic concept of change. Surprisingly, these conditions are slowly vanishing.

Economic conditions of inflation, desire to maintain a high standard of living, or develop “one’s identity” are contributing to the economic push of women into the workforce. Thus, the financial burden is stated as main stressors among working women. But as women increasingly gain occupational mobility, they are not only exposed to the same physical hazards of the work environment as men but also exposed to the pressures created by multiple role demands and
conflicting expectations. By fulfilling their economic needs, employment has no doubt made women independent with an identifiable social status but it has also made them juggle into two main domains of life - work and family. They have stepped into workplace but the role responsibilities of women still remain the same\textsuperscript{29}.

Employers may tend to opt for providing a minimum job description and directions. They may expect an entrepreneurial outlook in their employees with readiness to respond to rapidly changing demands of work. Such all environments entail stressful opportunities with uncertain outcomes. It is likely that women on multiple tasks and on varying roles at home work and paid work may take advantage of the challenging work environment viewed otherwise as sufficiently threatening and demanding to motivate women to recede to the prevailing boundaries existing for women in society. As stress is associated with constraints and demands, and as a set of emerging conditions seem to affect the quality of life of women, it is more than just an occasional need to enquire into the possibilities of promoting entrepreneurship by empowering women. In an environment where downsizing or re-engineering in organizations surface recognizable stress symptoms in most of the female organizational participants who may be potential unemployables, spontaneous necessity emerges to probe into the stress of women entrepreneurs as entrepreneurship could absorb many such women.

The women entrepreneurship development is influenced by many complicated factors including economical, social, cultural and physiological prevailing in the society. Women Entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged, prompted and supplemented to the benefit of the aggregate economy of the country. Women account roughly half of the world’s population and perform 2/3 rd of the hours of work, receive 1/10th of the world’s income and have less than 1/100th of the world’s property registered in their names\textsuperscript{30}.

Although women go through a cycle of work from homework to paid work to homework, women are exposed to reconcile with pressures placed on them from multiple role demands. Expectations of role senders are not always
clearly understood. However, women attempt to satisfy role demands by constant endeavors to compromise with factors such as inadequate resources, role overload, and role ambiguity.

While it is true that men may face more immediate life threatening occupational hazards, women appear to be more vulnerable to stress included illnesses, for a variety of reasons. First, they are socialized to being caretakers, and as such they almost automatically take on responsibilities that men might not even consider. This alone adds to the stress loads they carry. Second, women as a whole are less likely to be in positions of power and are not as able to control what's going on in their environment as most men. If you can't say no, the stress you feel can be doubly disastrous because you don’t see any escape. The less power you have over the circumstances of your everyday existence, the heavier the stress load.

It may be obvious that what complicates a women’s stress is work. Men who are stretched thin at their workplaces often go home to relax. Women, on the other hand, go home & keep on working. In spite of the increasing number of women with careers & jobs, traditional roles in their home still take precedence for many women. They can be expected to be in charge of everything from childcare to laundry, food preparation, social calendar, and running noses. Delegating these duties to others in their household helps, but in the long run most women are still in-charge. Given this situation their minds as well as their bodies work overtime. When they become angry about too much to do in too little time with too little help, the anger only adds to their overstressed physical condition. Even women who tend their own need to slowdown are programmed towards over commitment because they feel about not being able to be everything to everyone in their lives. Time spent alone or nurturing their own mental and physical well-being might be construed as selfish, so they push even harder on all fronts - home, work, and social. Sociologists speculate that many women today may be disadvantaged because they have incorporated a male standard for achievement in the work world with an old fashioned female standard for perfection at home.
Pressures to perform at paid work and at home work enable women to search for effective coping mechanisms. Thus, sources of stress are many and varied. Demands at work act as a major source of stress arising from multiple roles of women entrepreneurs. Understanding work-related stress of women entrepreneurs and generating coping interventions, therefore, enter the ambit of this research.
REFERENCES


