Chapter 2
Organizational Stress: A Theoretical Framework
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A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the concept of stress and organizational stress by focusing on the historical roots and its underlying nature and basic features; to gain the knowledge about variations of stress; reactions to stress and implications of organizational stress. The chapter forms the basic foundation for the empirical research. An attempt has also been made to highlight the likely sources and consequences of organization stress individually as well as organization wise.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

“Stress is a word derived from Latin and was used popularly in the seventeenth century to mean, hardship, straits, adversity or affliction”. Hinkle (1973), “during the late eighteenth century, its use evolved to denote force, pressure, strain or strong effort, with reference primarily instrumentally to a person or to person’s organs or mental powers”.

According to Selye, (1974) “Stress refers to a state of deviation or variation from normal state due to unplanned or improperly designed system or work process resulting into failures and non-accomplishment of goals. A complete freedom from stress is death”.

Beatty (2001) found “that stress allows us to be at our best and the body needs to react appropriately when experiencing a physical threat in order to survive. An acute experience of stressful situation is not harmful. It is the chronic or long term stress response that can be dangerous to one’s health”.

Stress is a psychological condition and body discomfort. Stress is experienced by every individual at different times. In case of employees, meeting goals at workplace and finishing the task on time is a cause of stress. Stress is necessary and cannot be avoided in life due to problems and competition in daily lives. The changes are found
nowadays, and no individual is free from stress whether job stress or day to day stress that has become an unavoidable part of life and has gained remarkable attention over the years.

In other words, when we want to achieve some desired goal and start working for it, we become anxious for its results. When this anxiety is increased and mental strain is created, it is called tension or stress. When stress is positive and includes one’s confidence and determination for the success of one’s performance to achieve desired goal, it leads towards healthy approach and optimistic attitude to the life. But when it is negative and includes one’s hopelessness for one’s performance, it carries towards the state of mental depression and makes one pessimistic towards life. Excessive negative tension results in suicide or heinous crimes, while positive stress is harbinger of enthusiasm and success. Stress is a wide phenomenon as it seems to have universal spread. The concern for stress arises because it has more of negative consequences than positive.

Stress is a product of busyness of modern life. Newton (1995) refers to stress as “an epidemic plaguing modernity”. It has assumed graved dimensions ever since the emergence of industrialism. Stress is an additive phenomenon. It builds up over time. Stress is a problem that must be borne by the management and those in senior positions whether captains of industry or leader of Government. Generally, one goes through stress when things are moving in the opposite direction as desired by an individual and not behaving normally. Greater desire and needs linked with high degree of uncertainty to fulfill the demands causes stress.

According to Luthan (1979), stress is defined “as an adaptive response to external situations that results in physical, psychological and/or behavioral deviations for organizational participants, affecting not only our physical health but our mental well being too, so to successfully manage stress in everyday life, individual can learn to relax and enjoy life”. One can always take due prevention and precautions in order to manage stress, which may be really difficult at times. But still efforts can be made in this direction to get rid of stress.
Stress creates imbalance sometimes, by affecting harmfully biologically and mentally. Different ways are adopted by individuals to deal with stress as it is difficult to be in tension always. The way they deal with it is called coping. Coping refers “to a person’s active efforts to resolve stress and create new ways of handling new situations at each stage of life” Erikson (1959). (Source: http://www.etd.uasd.edu)

Any demand on the body results into some sort of response. It all depends upon the type of demand that physical reactions are made in the body. If demand is in the form of anger due to unaccomplished goal or anything, the body prepares and responds accordingly to this type of stress. All the factors that are responsible for such a response from the body are known as stressors. Stress can lead to two types of strain—emotional and physical strain resulting into tension, depression, lack of concentration to do something, irritability, headache, fast pulse rate, and chest pain.

### 2.2 CONCEPT OF STRESS

“Stress was popularly used in seventeenth century to mean hardship, strain, adversity, and affliction; in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to denote force, pressure, and strain or strong effort with reference to object or person; in engineering and physics, the term implies an external force or pressure exerted to distort and being resisted by the person or object on which it is exerted; in psycho-physiology, stress refers to some stimulus resulting in a detectable strain that cannot be accommodated by the organism and which ultimately results in impaired health or behavior”.

(Source: http://www.nationalhrd.org)

According to Selye (1956) stress is “any external event or internal drive which threatens to upset the organism equilibrium”.

Robbins (1992) stated stress is “a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important”.

Wolf and Goodell (1968) defined stress “as a dynamic state within an organism in response to a demand for adaptation”.

(Source: http://www.etd.uasd.edu)
Cofer and Appley (1964) defined stress “as a state of an organism where he perceives that his wellbeing is endangered and that he must direct all his energies to its protection”.

Lazarus (1966) referred stress as “a state of imbalance with in an organism that is elicited by an actual/perceived disparity between environmental demands and the organism’s capacity to cope with these demands; and is manifested through variety of physiological, emotional, and behavioral responses”.

McGrath (1970) defined stress “as a perceived imbalance between demand and response capacity under conditions where failure to meet demand has important consequences”.

Cox (1978) found that stress can be response and stimulus, as the interfering parameters.

Only when stress is allowed to become excessive does it give rise to sickness and strain. Most people could provide a list of disorders such as peptic ulcers, hypertension, and coronary disease. The link between these ailments and environmental distress is now fairly well established. Transitions, regardless of what sort they are, represent a disruption in one’s routines. Hence, they cause a disruption of equilibrium. Even positive, carefully planned transitions lead into new areas for the individual and to the disruption of that person routine to some extent. The stress response (“strain”) is a major factor to consider in the study of transitions because transitions are always, to a greater or lesser degree, strains inducing. Williamson (n.d.) “Strain is a non- specific physiological response to disruption, and towards relating the chronic experience of this response to the risk of various illness and other health changes (e.g., accidents) Adams (1980)”. “To a growing number of doctors and behavioral scientists, strain is becoming the basic bridge between psychology and medical pathology”. Strain is body’s physical, mental and chemical reaction to disruptions, which prepares one to handle the unfamiliar or the frightening. It is both good and bad. Strain is needed for alertness and performance of high quality work. It can be used as a source of increased energy and strength and on the other hand, chronic and prolonged strain can cause or heighten the effects of vast array of
diseases. Chronic strain increases the risk of illness. The stress response triggers the automatic nervous system, which ordinarily serves to keep our bodies in equilibrium through controlling our metabolism and growth rates. It does this through acting on our thyroid and pituitary glands, telling them when to release hormones into our bodies. It is called the automatic nervous system because it is autonomous. That is, it normally is beyond our conscious abilities to control it. The automatic nervous system also is set off frequently by disruptions from outside and this is the beginning of the stress response. We can view stress not as a bad thing to be avoided but as a fact of our lives.

Stress is that condition of strain which has an impact on mind, thinking process, and biological functions of a person. Stress is any demand which call for a different behavior from an individual. And this behavioral change helps individual to fight or deal with those strenuous situations. Stress reasons could be related to internal or external organizational environment and individual reasons.

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

Pestonjee (1992) described three parameters of life in which Stress generates; i.e., Job and the organization; the social sector; and the intra-psychic sector. Job and organization is the job and work environment as a whole such as work, physical conditions and atmosphere, relationship at work with colleagues, salary, organizational policies and standards, etc. The social sector means social circle and friends. The intra-psychic factors are related to individual personality and are very much intimate such as individual’s nature and temperament, his values, abilities, and health. It is observed that stress can arise from any such factor or combination of such factors. In the figure below it can be seen that the “magnitude of stress emanating from the stress to learner limit of the individual to handle this stress, indicating a balanced state”.
2.3 NATURE OF STRESS

The stress response is always basically the same, differing only in the degree of reactivity of the individuals and individual organs. This leaves open two possibilities for significant differences. First, there is a possibility that executive as a class may be subjected to exposure to certain types of stressor to a greater extent than other individuals. Secondly, there is a possibility that executive as a class may be peculiarly susceptible to certain adverse effects of the stress response.

Stress affects each person differently as everyone reacts in their own unique way to it. A workplace stress can cause dysfunctional behavior at work and can also lead to poor physical and mental health. Not only this but stress can also lead to physiological and psychological problem too that can lead to great problem and may be a need for medical treatment.

2.4 PRESSURE AND STRESS

The term pressure refers to those features of a situation that may be problematic for the individual and that amount to demands for adaptation of some kind. Stress, on the other hand, refers to a specific set of biochemical conditions within the person’s body-conditions that reflect the body’s attempt to make the adjustment. In short, pressure is...
in the situation; stress is in the person. A demand on the person and inability to cope with those demands due to lack of knowledge is a major cause of stress.

2.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF STRESS

Stress is dependent on the situation and individual reaction towards that situation depends on individual perception. Stress encountered in office gets added to stress at home and vice-versa. Upward spiraling of stress needs to be broken, lest it should manifest into an irreversible damage like burnout. Stress arises when uncertainty to fulfill the needs and desires seems to be greater than the forces that will accomplish those desires.

The four different ways in which the term stress has been used are stated as follows:

a) Stimulus (external force)
b) Response to stimulus
c) Stimulus and the response interaction
d) A comprehensive phenomenon encompassing all the three.

The basic features of stress are stated as follows:

- Stress can arise in the form of psychological and physiological stress.
- Its applicability is to male as well as female.
- When an actual situation does not turn out to be an expected situation, stress arises.
- Stress is based on symptoms. Actual stress is a result of ignoring the potential stress which is based on symptoms.
- Stress can be both positive (Eustress) and negative (Distress).
- Stress arises due to interaction of a person with some factors or mediation of the internal or external factors. It is a reaction that arises when person gets interacted with some external factors.
- Job stress arises at workplace.
- Stress is related to the attitude of the person. The personality of the individual to adapt to a particular situation is also a crucial factor in managing stress.
• The outcome of stress can be physiological and psychological disorders such as cardiac arrest, high blood pressure, neurological disorders, neck pain, chest pain, depression, anxiety, feeling of neglect, anger, irritability, feeling of failure, low self esteem, etc.

Stress is the response to an external force operating in the environment. The response could be physical or emotional response from the body to pressures put on it. Stress results from the reaction of an individual to outside events and not necessarily from the events themselves. Stress is not necessarily bad in and of itself. Some stress is required to get things done in day to day matter. Stress has a positive impact as well as negative impact. We may consider it as a chance to do something, particularly, in those cases, where there is something to gain professionally or otherwise. It could lead to achievement, higher productivity, and effectiveness.

2.6 STRESS AS STIMULUS AND RESPONSE

Stress as it applies to human biology, has been defined as “the body’s involuntary reaction to the demanding life that an individual chooses”. Lazarus (1966) has explained the term stress and its nature under the following two categories (Lazarus, 1966).

A. Stimulus Definition of stress
B. Response Definition of stress

2.6.1 Stimulus Definition of Stress - Stress as stimulus or external force acting on the organism. Stress as stimulus means any event of life or those circumstances when individual cannot respond to it adequately that are responsible for all types of reactions whether physical or psychological on the individual that leads to illness. It can be in the form of fatigue, tension, etc. This definition of stress emphasizes the external or situational aspect as well as unusual or extreme nature to deal with is called “stress stimulus”. Further, it produced disturbed reactions called “stress reactions”. Anything abnormal in the situation can unbalance a person’s equilibrium. This state of disequilibrium causes a reaction to restore equilibrium and in turn leads to stress. (Selye, 1976)
2.6.2 Response Definition of Stress - Stress as response or changes in physiological functions.

Selye (1976) defined stress “as the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it”. An alternative meaning to the term “stress” focuses on the responses or reactions of the person rather than the situations producing them.

Stress is defined as the bodily response to various pressures or demands from the external environment.

Yates (1979) described “stress as an external force operating on the system be it an organization or a person that results in the individual preparing to take action”.

Experience of stress due to any reason or any circumstance generates a reaction in the body and is called "fight or flight" response. To deal with stress by using "fight or flight response" body’s first automatic, inborn reaction comes out that helps the body to "fight" or "flee" from anticipated threat situations for living. The fight reaction may take a variety of forms such as aggression or attack, defensive fighting, defensive posturing, defensive vocalization. Whether the initial arousal stage of the G.A.S. (General Adaptation Syndrome) leads to fight or flight appears to depend upon whether anger or fear emerges as a predominant feeling. When fear appears as the predominant emotional response, there is still an alternative; the resultant behavior may take the form of defensive fighting, immobility or flight. Unsuccessful flight-failure to escape noxious stimulus- may result in defensive fighting or immobility. Successful flight- escape from the stress stimulus- will probably produce relief from stress but may be followed by feelings of anger, guilt, worry, anxiety or some combination of these depending on one’s subsequent state and review and reassessment of the original stressful situation and individual reaction to it. Such feelings, as we have seen, lead to further stress from internal stimuli, thus continuing the reaction cycle. Therefore, whether the behavioral outcome of the stress response is fight or flight, the emotional arousal pattern and the subsequent psychological and the physiological effects are essentially the same- the diseases of adaptation: somatic, psychosomatic and psychological. Likewise, the inhibition of the flight response will have similarly adverse results for the same reasons.
Stress is thus an internal response of a system to environmental demands. The environmental demands are stressors. This definition makes it clear that a definition of stress in terms of stimulus alone is insufficient.

### 2.7 TRANSACTIONAL STRESS

CoAYa and Emilia (2012); stated Lazarus (1966) theory “as the step which leads towards directing research from the stress field in another direction than before, thus contributing to the birth of new research paradigms, paradigms which prove to offer an elaborate and complex outlook on stress, as well as the transactional stress theory”.

From this perspective “stress is a person environment interaction in which it is important to evaluate the environment’s demands which exceed the personal adaptation resources and threaten the welfare of a person; this process activates coping mechanisms and feed-back type responses at an affective – physiologic, cognitive, and behavioral level”.

The concept of stress also contains two other meanings which need to be distinguished from each other. These meanings concern physiological processes and psychological processes involved in the stress. These processes are discussed in below:

### 2.8 PHYSIOLOGICAL STRESS

To the psychologist, stress means the disturbance of the structure or functioning of tissue systems as a result of noxious stimuli such as heat, cold, micro organisms or physical injuries.

Selye (1976) has pioneered the view that regardless of the specific noxious stimuli be it a wound, infection or psychological assault, the body will respond with the same type of reaction, i.e., in other words, the human body has a stereo typed bio chemical response to demands, whether pleasant or unpleasant.

There may be different type of factors causing stress but all having the same physical response. This reaction is the body’s way of defending against the damaging and restoring the system to normal. The defense against a “stressor” (the noxious stimuli
which results in physiological stress reaction) is called by Selye, “the General Adaptation Syndrome” (G.A.S.). It is highly complex series of interacting events which constitute the human response to any stressor.

According to Selye (1976), the General Adaptation Syndrome comprises of three phases.

1. **Alarm**
2. **Resistance**
3. **Exhaustion**

![Figure 2.2: Phases of General Adaptation Syndrome](image)

**Figure 2.2: Phases of General Adaptation Syndrome**


1. **Alarm Stage**- A stage where a brain detects a threat or stressor triggering the responses. This stage is elicited upon sudden exposures to stressors to which the body is not qualitatively or quantitatively adapted. This stage has two sub stages: 1) The shock sub stage characterized by fight or flight reaction, and 2) the counter shock sub stage, characterized by the reversal of the initial fight or flight symptoms and certain internal organic changes. In this stage, the general resistance of the body to the particular stressor tends to drop below normal or a state of psychological disequilibrium. It results into adrenalin discharge, increased heart rate and gastro intestinal ulceration.

2. **Resistance Stage**- In this stage, a body adapts to the stressors and appears to be coping. The self esteem begins to adapt to the stressor through a gradual increase in the resistance to it and decrease in resistance to other stimuli. There is a possibility of maximum adaptation. Alarm reaction sign disappears from the body.
3. **Exhaustion stage**- A stage in which the body’s energy stores and hormone reserves being deleted, which could lead to stress related conditions such as hypertension or depression as the stress response systems becomes exhausted. The self system is no longer able to maintain the state of adaptation. If the stress continues for a long enough periods, the third stage may be precursor to death or collapse of the organism. Also called manifestation of stress.

### 2.9 PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS

In physiological stress, the stimuli consist of physical injuries or physical changes in the environments that are injurious such as extreme heat or cold. Psychological stress refers to purely psychological processes by which a stimulus is judged as harmful and by which the individual attempts behaviorally to cope with the problem.

Although many of the physiological effects of the psychological processes are similar to those that occur in response to physically noxious stimuli, the basic tissues are not the same. Different processes are involved, requiring different theories and the study of different kind of observable variables. Psychological stress represents a totally different level and type of analysis from physiological stress and comprises a separate although related set of problems.

### 2.10 VARIATIONS OF STRESS - DISTRESS AND EUSTRESS / HYPER STRESS AND HYPO STRESS

Some stress is required to get success, but unnecessary stress is a cause of negative stress. External forces causes stress, these forces on their own are not stressful. It is how a person considers these threats or situations and take action accordingly that becomes a cause of stress. Stress is perceived differently by individuals. It can never be same for two persons; for one, it may be negative and for another, it may be viewed as positive.

Most of the people experience stress due to variety of environmental or situational factors (stressors) and when they are unable to cope with these stressors they experience negative stress or Distress which causes pain, anxiety, depression, and
mental pressure that must be overcome. This is due to an imbalance between the mindset and body responses which are not able to cope with the changes at workplace resulting into acute (not last for a long period of time) and chronic stress (arises for a long period of time). When these same stressors are viewed as challenging, interesting, and motivating factors, people experience positive stress or Eustress. It prepares mind and body to deal with the challenges and cope with it successfully. According to Pestonjee (1992) stress could have a positive or negative consequence depending upon how it is perceived.

Similarly, depending upon its intensity, there are two other variations of stress i.e., Overstress (Hyper stress) and Understress (Hypo stress). Hyper stress is negative stress caused due to inability to manage workload such as long working hours given to him that he could not manage easily resulting into emotional breakdowns and mood swings giving chronic disease or physiological reactions. Hypo stress arises when individual has no work or less work, a cause of de-motivation and boredom. This all is due to insufficient stress a person is suffering from. So, therefore, some amount of stress is good for a person to get the work done. The four variations of stress are diagrammatically represented in the figure:

![Figure 2.3: Four Variations of Stress](Source: Agarwal 2005)

Since stress is essential to life and indeed unavoidable in any event, executives should strive to manage their stress levels and stress responses as to minimize the distressing effects and maximize eustress effects. Stress is both essential and unavoidable.
2.11 ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

The study of organizational stress is considered to be important for the reasons: (a) harmful stress effects on employees emotionally and biologically (b) a major factor for employee turnover and absenteeism (c) harmful stress effects on one employee can be harmful for other employee.

Organizational stress arises when people interact with their jobs and change is required within people due to the factors of job that forces them to move away from the normal functioning in the organization. Organizational stress originates in organizational demands which are experienced by the individual. There are two related causes for organizational stress study. Firstly, mishandled organizational stress may be a cause of person’s strain which can be harmful for personnel working in the organization resulting into deteriorated quality of work, zero or low productivity, turnover and absenteeism, etc. Secondly, when organization manages stress, it leads to improved performance, workers satisfaction, involvement and productivity. Organizational stress arises due to factors related to job but also is very much dependent upon the individual personality.

Murphy (1979) defined “organizational stress as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker; it can lead to poor health and even injury”.

Stress in organizations can be due to mismatch between person’s knowledge, skills and capabilities and the pressures of the job and also due to the demands of an individual not fulfilled from his job.

Cooper and Marshall (1976) recognized that occupational stress means stressors such as work overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, and poor working conditions associated with a particular job.

According to Caplan and Jones (1975), organizational stress is damaging to both employees health and also to the well being of the organization they work for. The main cause of workplace stress is when an employee’s knowledge and abilities are not in syne with his or her job demands and pressures, e.g., when an employee is hired for
a role and is given a little or no training on how to do his/her job, but is unable to cope with the demands of the job. The factors such as no support from the authorities, no control over their work and its demands add to workplace stress.

In general, individual feel stressed due to unaccomplished goals and desires. Greater desires associated with greater uncertainty to achieve the desire is the cause of stress. In other words, the basic causes of organization stress are stated below:

- Lack of matching between work demands and pressures and workers knowledge and abilities.
- Lack of control over their work or choice in the work being performed by them. This also leads to job dissatisfaction.
- Lack of support from authorities.
- Lack of management in terms of communication, leadership, objectives and structure across the organization.

There are several aspects of organizational stress stated as follows:

1) Organizational stress is an additive concept- The larger the number of events perceived as stressful, the greater is the stress experience.

2) An outcome of the interaction of person and environment because environment presents a set of dynamic condition or potential stressors that are demanding.

3) Organizational stress can be both physical (noise, heat, temperature) as well as psychological.

4) Stress can be both positive and negative. Stress is not necessarily always dysfunctional or negative. If a challenge can motivate and stimulate a person to innovate and contribute his / her best resulting in better performance then it offers potential gains.
2.12 IMPLICATIONS OF ORGANIZATION STRESS

The infinite numbers of stressors are operating at work. The work based stressors come from the job a person does and the environment within which a person does that job. There are various stress effects that can be seen. For many, stress is to motivate the employees and increase the productivity in the organization and for many, it is problematic resulting into wrong and hasty decision making, frustration etc., affecting the health and performance of the employees and in turn affects the health of the organization. Negative implications of stress for the organization may be identified as under:

(a) Physical: (i) Poor performance outcome affecting the quality and quantity of work, ambiguous role definitions, (ii) Absenteeism at work, (iii) Negative business results.

(b) Social: (i) Increased social tensions, (ii) Resistance to social change, (iii) Withdrawal from normal social networks.

(c) Psychological: (i) Deterioration in morale and satisfaction, (ii) Ineffective communications, (iii) Irrational judgments about others, (iv) Sense of distrust

(d) Behavioral: (i) Poor decision making and its implementation, (ii) Accidents in workplaces, (ii) Loss of potential human resources.

2.13 SOURCES OF STRESS

According to Cooper (1986), stress is seen as the product of an interaction between individual needs and resources and the various demands, constraints, and facilitators within the individual’s immediate environment. Cooper (1986) presents comprehensive overview of both the causes of work stress and the organisational and individual problems, which may arise when the individual worker experiences those stressors. The medical terminology adopted by Cooper facilitates the task of sanitising organisation life by implying that both the individual and the organisational outcomes of stress are self-evidently pathological and thus in need of treatment rather than illumination. The various stressors are mentioned below –
1) **Extra Organizational Stressors** – These are the environmental factors of stress that include all those objects or events, which precipitate, or contribute to, the stress response in the individual, but which originate outside of the individual. Such objects and events constitute noxious stimuli, and these stimuli do not necessarily have to penetrate the self system to initiate the stress response. Sometimes a mere perceived threat of such a stimulus will trigger a stress reaction and avoidance behavior. Thus the significant feature of encounter with noxious stimuli is not whether the stimulus is invading the self system, but the nature of reaction to the stimulus, whether there is actual penetration or mere perception. The factors can be physical, biotic, social (race, sex), technological changes, and unwanted changes in life. These factors can be internal factors of the organization such as goals, systems, policies, structure, and standards of the company. External factors are general environment (political, legal, governmental, etc..) of the organization.

2) **Intra Organizational Stressors**

2.1 **Organizational Stressors** - Organizational stressors are those stressors which are beyond the control of the individual at workplace resulting into frustration. This may be due to the lack of knowledge, skills and understanding one has, to perform the job affecting ones health. There could be several reasons for job stress like an individual is not getting the required appraisal from the job accomplishments. The work based stressors come from the job a person does and the environment within which a person does that job. There are infinite numbers of stressors operating at work and these are explained as follows:

2.1.1) Factors intrinsic to the job;

2.1.2) Role in the organization;

2.1.3) Relationship at work;

2.1.4) Organizational structure and climate; and

2.1.5) Career development occupational change.
All these factors are explained hereunder:

2.1.1 Factors intrinsic to the job- Each job has sources of stress, which are integrally connected to that particular job requirements. Stress can arise from too much or too little work, time pressures and deadlines, having too many decisions, (Sofer 1970), excessive travel, long hours and having to cope with changes at work and the expenses (monetary and career) of making mistakes (Kearns 1973). Among them, the major ones identified are:

2.1.1.1 Improper Working Condition–The physical surrounding of the workplace, lighting, temperature, air and noise pollution, dust, use of toxic chemicals and pollution caused by such chemicals, radiation from chemicals, lack of proper ventilation, unsafe working conditions, etc., affect overall mental state leading to stress. Koruhauser (1965) suggested that “Poor Mental Health” was related to unpleasant working conditions. According to Marcson (1970) and Shepard (1971), “physical health is adversely affected by repetitive and dehumanizing environment”. Poor the working conditions, higher would be the stress levels of the employees.

2.1.1.2 Work Overload or Under load – Overload is one concept which receives a great deal of attention. Excessive overload can lead to general breakdown in a system no matter what the level of the system is. A system could be starting from single biological cells to individuals to organization to states. Overload causes job tension; job tension causes overload and both overload and tension is caused by some third factor. Repetitive task, excessive work demands crossing all the boundaries of individual’s personal capacities and reaching a saturation point cause stress. French and Caplan (1973) differentiate, overload in terms of quantitative and qualitative overload and suggested that this can lead to a range of stress related illness. A quantitative overload exists when the individual has too much to do in a given time period. He may be fully competent in his work but the time restriction is what elicits the stress reaction. In case of qualitative overload, stress occurs when the work crosses the boundaries of competence and skills of the individual. The work may demand continuous concentration,
innovation and meaningful decisions. The consequence of this stress is emotional and mental fatigue and headache. Hans Selye, the father of stress research, refers to these problems as “Deprivational Stress”. Fulcheri et al. (1995) also observed that “size of workloads, the complexity of tasks and responsibility are the major sources of stress factors and the reasons for frustration are delay in career development and a slow erosion of status among the managers”.

2.1.1.3 New Technology- The information on new technology into the work environment requires employees to adapt continually to new equipment systems and ways of working. These changes are distressful as it disrupts behavioral, psychological, and cognition patterns of functioning.

2.1.1.4 Information Overload - The modern day executives are exposed to more information that they can actually remember. An overload of information may interfere with an executive’s ability to think and to process information in order to make sound decisions and thus a potential source of stress.

2.1.1.5 Organisational Tasks: In order to meet the goals of the organisation, certain tasks are defined and they are called organisational tasks. If these tasks are not designed in proper way, it would be a cause of greater stress. These tasks may include demands from the task, task interdependency, task overload, etc.

2.1.2 Role in the Organization - Organizational role is a position in the organization, which gets defined by the expectations of the significant people in the organization. Role occupant connects himself/herself with the organization through his/her role and performs certain functions to fulfill his/her role expectations. It is important to understand that an organization is a super-system of roles and role in itself is a system. A role at work place is another cause of stress in people at work. Different roles are performed by an individual both at home and at workplace. A role of father, husband etc at home and a role of boss, subordinate or team leader, etc., at workplace. One has to perform all the roles simultaneously, a cause of anxiety and stress. Pareek (1993) pointed out that a role occupant has to face two role systems in the organization (1)Role space and (2) Role set.
Role Space: It represents all the roles performed by an individual. For example, an individual can play the role of a sales manager in an organization and the role of a mother at home. E.g., a role of a father, son, an executive, etc., and in the center of the role space is the self.

Role Set: This represents all the roles with whom a role occupant is required to interact for the performance of his role. For example, the role set for a production manager includes his boss (the general manager), peers (the R&D manager, quality manager, plant manager, marketing manager, finance manager, and HR manager), and subordinates (the production executives in charge of production planning, manufacturing, and testing). Different expectations from the different role occupants of role set are there and are called role senders.

‘Role space’ and ‘Role Set’ gives rise to conflicts that are inbuilt. These conflicts give rise to ten types of role stresses – Conflicts from Role Space category includes Inter role distance, role stagnation, self role distance and Role Set category conflicts gives rise to role expectation conflict, role erosion, role overload, role isolation, personal inadequacy, role ambiguity and resource inadequacy.

Pareek (1983) has pointed out ten role stressors. They are described here briefly:

2.1.2.1 Inter Role Distance (IRD) - It arises due to the conflict between organizational and non-organizational roles, for example, HR manager role versus husband role.

2.1.2.2 Role Stagnation (RS) - This kind of stress is the result of the gap between the demand to outgrow a previous role and to accept a fresh role efficiently. A thought of being in the same role for a long time.

2.1.2.3 Self Role Distance - This stress is experienced when there is a conflict between the role that one understands and the role demands generated, it is due to gap between the person skills and his/her job.

2.1.2.4 Role Ambiguity - This stress arises due to inaccurate information and also due to lack of clarity about information; there is a lack of clarity of objectives,
expectations of the work role, about the range of work to be done and responsibility of the job. Studies conducted by Kahn et al. (1964) has pointed out “that employees suffering from role ambiguity have low job satisfaction, high level of stress due to job tension, low job performance, and self confidence”.

2.1.2.5 Role Expectation Conflict (REC) – It is a stress generated by different types of demands coming from colleagues that may be conflicting, i.e., superior, subordinate and peers in the organization.

2.1.2.6 Role Erosion (RE) - This stress arises when a role has become less important than it is used to be, or when somebody else gets the credit for doing things of considerable importance.

2.1.2.7 Role Overload (RO) - This stress is the feeling that one is required to do much or doing things of considerable importance. Role overload stress can be of quantitative (too much to do) and qualitative (too difficult work and role accountability).

2.1.2.8 Role Isolation- Role Isolation is experienced when the role occupant feels cut off from the channels of communication. He does not have the required frequency or ease of interaction and feels distanced. Lack of communication in the organization due to any reason–structures, systems or something else–would lead to Role Isolation. It gives a feeling of distance between oneself and others.

2.1.2.9 Personal Inadequacy- This stress is created due to the inadequate skills, competence and training to meet the demands of the work given. This is due to lack of training to the employees to be able to meet the environmental (internal and external) demands.

2.1.2.10 Resource Inadequacy- Stress experienced due to lack of resources (human or material) in the organization and inability to meet the demands of the role due to this.
Other Role Stressors

2.1.2.11 Under Utilization of Skills – Stress also arises due to under utilization of skills leading to few growth opportunities, insecurity of job, lack of clarity of objectives, and job dissatisfaction.

2.1.2.12 Responsibility for Others – The responsibilities a person has constitute another frequent stress in the organizations. Responsibility for persons includes their work, their careers, professional development, and their job security. Responsibility for things includes budgets, projects, equipment, and other property. Responsibility for people means devoting much time to work and interact with others in meeting demands of the work. This type of stress is particularly found to be very high in case of jobs of welfare of the people resulting into burnout (emotionally and physically exhaustion stage).

2.1.2.13 The other stressors in the organization could be too little work and responsibility, no involvement in decision-making, no support from management, responsibility to maintain performance standards and coping with change.

2.1.3 Relationship at Work: Relationships and interactions with others at work are a major source of stress. Many researchers (Argyris 1964; Cooper 1973) have found that positive and good relationship at workplace between employees is the main factor responsible for individual and organizational health. The nature of relationship existing within organizations and their likely effect on stress is described as under:

2.1.3.1 Group Dynamics: Smith (1979) “A group is a largest set of two or more individuals who are jointly characterised by a network of relevant communications, a shared sense of collective identity and one or more shared dispositions with associated normative strength”. An individual in the organisation receives cohesiveness, recognition; social support through formal and informal groups thus helps in relieving stress.
2.1.3.2 **Relationships with Superior:** Buck (1972) focused “on the attitude and relationship of workers and managers to their immediate boss. He concludes that the ‘considerate behaviour of supervisors appears to have contributed significantly (inversely) to feelings of job pressure’.

2.1.3.3 **Relationships with Subordinates:** One of the most crucial functions of the manager is his supervision of other people’s work. Earlier research established that an ‘Inability to Delegate’ might be a problem but now a new potential stressor has been introduced in the manager’s interpersonal skills i.e., he must learn to ‘Manage by Participation’. Donaldson and Gowler (1975) have identified factors, which make today’s emphasis on participation, a cause of resentment, anxiety, and stress for manager concerned:

- No matching between role authority and powers;
- Objection on the role erosion of the managers;
- Irreconcilable pressures; and
- Refusal of subordinates to participate with manager.

2.1.3.4 **Relationships with Colleagues:** Besides the obvious factors of office politics and colleague rivalry, Lazarus (1966) in his study pointed out that stress can be caused by the pressure of relationships and also by its opposite- no social support in strenuous conditions. Generally, it is found that at high levels, one feels difficulty in sharing problems as it would affect his position and may also show him weak and much of the literature particularly mentions the isolated life of top executive as an added source of strain.

2.1.4 **Organizational Structure and Climate:** The existence of climate in the organization can be a potential source of stressors. The freedom given to the plan of work, support given to the views and opinions, provision of good working conditions, free and fair communication, leadership styles, and sympathetic approach towards personal problems were considered to measure the stressors in organizational climate.

2.1.4.1 **Organisational Structure and Climate:** The various aspects of organisational structure such as personnel relationships, span of control, specialisation, centralisation,
etc., can also be a cause of stress as it is directed towards accomplishing individual and organisational goals.

2.1.4.2 Administrative Rules, Regulations and Policies: Ambiguous administrative rules, regulations and policies related to pay structures, competition, rigid rules and procedures can also be a cause of stress in organisation for employees.

2.1.4.3 Organisational Leaderships: If leadership style is authoritative, it would lead to stress in the organisation, so a need is to have a friendly climate free from all fears and anxiety.

2.1.4.4 Lack of Responsiveness: A particular damaging organizational stressor is when the upper echelons of management are simply unresponsive to the requests and reports of lower-level employees. Nothing seems to bother people more than just being ignored. Not only are people distressed when they are met with unresponsiveness; they are also discouraged from taking any initiative in future.

2.1.4.5 Lack of Participation: Not having the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect one’s job is an important organizational stressor. French and Caplan (1973) have summarized the findings of a number of separate studies on the effect of low participation on employees and highlighted that non-participation at work significantly leads to poor physical health, job dissatisfaction, no motivation to work and employee absenteeism from work.

2.1.5 Career Development: Another group of stressors at work is related to the career development i.e., how well an employee is progressing in his chosen career path. Advancement is an extremely important matter for most of employees. Lack of job security, under promotion, over promotion, and success itself can contribute to high stress levels. The related aspects are job security and job satisfaction.

2.2 Individual Factors: People who are under extreme stress do not perform well either at workplace or in other facets of their lives; they reduce their capacity for pleasure and their ability to interact with others. Stress bearing capacity varies from individual to individual depending upon the type of personality, how he reacts to the situation, and responds to it. Excessive stress is particularly deadly
for those with “Type A” personality characteristics exhibiting high risk, coronary prone behaviors and many a times, high chance to have heart problems than are their low risk and relaxed, “Type B” counterparts.

Because of the differences in the personality in terms of perception, experience, etc., individuals differ in their manner in responding to organizational environments.

- Logical reasoning and interpretation of an event on a subjective scale, perception of thing in a general sense (factual and complete) and an unconscious inner perception of the personalities help in understanding the environment.

- With the passage of time; experience in the job reduces stress levels. Dealing with various aspects of job challenges and learning as well as accepting things gradually by developing mechanisms to deal with stress from different situations helps in minimizing stress levels. As a result, experienced individual also adapts calm and cool attitude by way of ignoring various stressors.

- On the other hand, an individual with aggressive behavior feels more stress.

### 2.14 REACTIONS TO STRESS

Once an individual reaches a point at which he or she feels overstressed, the body and the mind reacts in some way to seek to reduce; avoid or withdraw from the stressful situation. If the stress continues, there eventually is a breakdown of some mental and physical component within the body that is simply no longer be able to deal with the situation. These are the few other reactions to stressors we find in our society today.

**Table 2.1: Reaction of Stressors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Withdraw, Avoidance, Reductions</th>
<th>Breakdown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pills, Medication, Alcohol, Absenteeism, Employee Turnover</td>
<td>Mental Breakdown, Coronary Heart Disease, Ulcer, Hypertension, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an effort to reduce, avoid or withdraw from the high stressor environment, many individuals resort to drugs, such as tranquillizers, sleeping pills or alcohol, in an effort to reduce the functioning of the mind so as to allow the individual to “relax” and be
somehow removed from the stressor–producing environment. Many other achieve 
some degree of stress reduction by withdrawing from stressful environment.
Executives may for example increase absenteeism or simply leave an organization 
altogether in order to find an environment which is less stress producing.

Those individuals who elect to “Tough it out” and remain within the high stressor 
environment may eventually reach a point of being no longer be able to cope with 
pressures exerted on them. Once their stress threshold has been exceeded, physical or 
mental breakdown is likely to occur.

The extent of such physical and mental breakdown in our society is evidenced by 
some medical facts. We certainly do not mean to imply that all or even most of these 
deaths were the direct results of individual stress reactions.

2.15 CONSEQUENCES OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS

Organizational stress can be defined as the “harmful physical and emotional responses 
that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or 
need of the worker” (Sauter and Murphy. 1999).

Individuals have different personalities and circumstances, due to which stress arises, but 
there may be certain common factors that affect every individual, these are stated below:

• Feeling out of control;
• Failing to keep commitments;
• Change;
• Uncertainty; and
• High Expectation of self.

2.15.1 Impact of Stress on People- individual Consequences

The effect of stress is different to different people. A mental stress causes anger, 
depression, strain, nervous problems, irritated attitude, headache, and tension.

Physiological stress always associates with hypertension, digestion tensions such as 
irritable bowel syndrome, diarrhea, etc., acidity causing ulceration, palpation and 
chest pain, headache, loss of appetite etc.
Behavioral stress may be seen in the behavior such as overeating, loneliness, sleeplessness, absenteeism, alcohol consumption, increased smoking and drug abuse. In other words, work stress can also affect people:

- In the form of increasing distressed and irritability;
- Lack of concentration;
- Loosing decision making power and not thinking logically and rationally;
- Less commitment towards work and not enjoying it thus taking it as a pressure;
- Always feel tired and depressed;
- Insomnia, illness including biological problems cardiac disease, hypertension, etc.

It may also happen that a person is feeling stressed but hiding it, in such a case, symptoms of stress might be more subtle such as working endlessly without tiring, increased use of alcohol, or other drug, inability to relax, etc., but if stress continuous considerably for a long and at the same time, no stress is felt by a person; then that is more harmful because it may result in the form of ulcers, chest and heart diseases, illness, and psychological problems.

Employee performance can have positive or negative effects due to stress. “Positive qualities are those in which the individual may feel more excited and agitated and perceive the situations positively as a form of challenge” (Selye, 1956). Stress affects each of us differently which means that each of us has our own unique stress signature. Any situation that an individual confronts, first of all attacks one’s mind and thought process and through this, it affects biologically, thus giving rise to physiological reactions in the form of any illness. A stressor can have different impacts and that depends upon the following parameters:

- Degree of stress caused by the presence of the stressor i.e., more the stressors, greater the stress; and
- Individual’s perception towards a stressor.

The various consequences of individual stress can be categorized under three general categories, physiological, psychological, and behavioral symptoms.
Physiological Consequences: Stress influences the biological system of the human being. Stress can lead to slow breathing, the heart rate gradually diminishes, blood pressure drops, the blood gets redistributed, and affecting sleep, diet, creating muscular tension, disease and a host of other variables begin to return to their previous baseline levels and even briefly below baseline. The parasympathetic rebound enables the body to repair the effects of its previous excitement through relaxation response, calmness, deep relaxation, meditation, etc. The result of high physical stress also leads to high metabolic rate affecting the body glands and disrupting the body functioning. Chronic stress is a continuous deterioration in the quality of the individual’s life. Life stress depends greatly on the overall balance of activities and experiences in one’s life. The organizational costs of stress derive directly from the collective individual costs.

Psychological Consequences: A psychological consequence of stress is related with one’s health emotionally. It is related with one’s thought process. When people experience too much stress at work, they may become depressed or may find themselves sleeping too much or not enough. Stress may also lead to family problems (Burke et al. 1979) and sexual difficulties (Quick & Quick 1984). Other psychological symptoms of stress are as under:

- Anxiety, tension (Jackson & Maslach 1982)
- Depression (Paykel 1976)

Behavioural Consequences: The behaviour of an individual also changes with stress levels, resulting into smoking habits, alcohol intakes, and also drug abuse. It can also lead to anxiety, apathy, depression, and emotional disorder. Other behavioural consequences are accident proneness, violence, and appetite disorder. Stress and behaviour related fallouts are stated below:

i) Perception and Decision Making: Stress affects the decision making power and interpersonal understanding and communication of the employees. They
become stress intolerable due to tension and anxiety and thus their perceptual distortions occur.

ii) **Developing Attitudes**: A negative attitude is developed in the employee due to stressful environment causing adverse influence on job performance.

iii) **Learning Capabilities**: An ability to adapt new methods and processes in the organisation is effected badly as stressful employees cannot learn the things quickly.

**Burnout**: Stress becomes a major problem when we are over stimulated or bombarded with too much work or too many disruptions and surprises. When such a situation is experienced, we may “burn out”. It is an exhaustion stage resulting into loss of productivity and performance. Burnout is the most severe stage of distress (Quick & Quick 1984).

According to Spector (2000), “burnout is a distressed psychological state; a person suffering from burnout is emotionally exhausted, has low work motivation, it involves being depressed about work and having little energy and enthusiasm for the job”.

**Table 2.2: Effects of Stress**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effects of Stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On body (Physical Effects)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aches and pain- head, chest, and back;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stomach problems- constipation, diarrhoea, and IBS;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cardiac problems- palpitations, blood pressure, and heart attack;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Decreased immunity, nausea, and dizziness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On feelings and thoughts (Emotional Effects)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Anxiety, depression, and sadness;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Irritation, Worries, and tensions;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aggressive behaviour;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inability to focus, Forgetfulness, and lack of concentration;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sense of isolation, and burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On behaviour (Behavioural Effects)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Eating habits effected- eating too much or too little;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use of drugs, alcohol, and cigarettes;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Living in isolation, withdrawal from social circle, and society;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Irritated behaviour, nervousness, shivering, quietness, and withdrawal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.15.2 Impact of Stress on Organization-organizational Consequences

Not only individuals are affected by stress but organizations too are affected as a result of this and have to bear a cost of it also in many forms.

The stress impact on teams in the organization can damage:

- The work performance of an employee;
- The overall performance of the employees as a team;
- Interpersonal relationships at workplace; and
- Employee’s cooperation spirit.

Work stress affects the organization in the form of:

- Increased absenteeism (Ivancevich 1986);
- Stressed workers lack motivation to come to work or may not feel well enough to come to work, which results in an increase in the number of workers not showing up for work on any given day;
- Lack of commitment in the work;
- A cost to company arises in the form of health care that arise due to increased illness, accidents, and disease caused by or related to stress;
- High accident rates;
- Performance decreases as the tendency to involve less in the work increases and thereby decreased productivity;
- Job dissatisfaction (Alderfer 1969; Caplan & Jones 1975);
- Customer not satisfied, increased complaints from customers;
- Staff or employees may be interested in leaving the companies and joining somewhere else or looking for less stressful job;
- Employee may not be able to cope with the pressure and finding himself physically unfit and may choose to resign;
- A legal action may be taken against the company by stressed employees; and
• Employees Stress can also negatively affect company’s image internally as well as externally.

Organisational change is required in the form of norm or ways of doing things at workplace that induces a lot of strain in people. Unclear responsibilities from ones superior can set off ones stress response. So, too, can too much work or too little work. Even having to work with people trained in a different area can be strain inducing. People in the organisation can examine their ways of working and make changes to reduce ambiguities, to balance workloads and to develop good working relations. It is noted that such changes can improve productivity and satisfaction.

2.16 STRESS - A MATTER OF CHOICE

No one can avoid stressful situations; they will all come our way whether at workplace or home. It is how we take a particular situation is important. Practically, most of our reaction to situations causes stress and so we need to control this reaction. According to Selye (1956), “It is not stress that kills us; it is our reaction to it.” Reacting intelligently to the situation can give positive results such as peace, calmness and happiness. This requires a complete control over mind which is possible only when a person understands the true nature of mind which is always changing and techniques of its control. Making a mind respond to the particular situation correctly requires a constant practice in the form of meditation etc.; thus, creating an aura for managing, understanding, and controlling any stressor at workplace or home.

It is one’s perception towards a situation and a matter of choice as to how to view a particular situation. One can view the situation as one is interested in i.e., a cup as either half full or empty. We can either allow stress to beat us or a conscious choice to remain happy in a stressful situation and overcome sadness. Our minds become gatekeepers for our bodies. It is up to us what and how we want things to get into our bodies through mind. There is a chemical flow in a body which is found to be healthy when all the efforts of an individual are towards providing calm to our body and creates a balance way of life.
CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a theoretical framework was discussed to explain the concept of stress in general and organizational stress in particular while focusing on the term stress and how it occurs in the body function. Stress is originally an engineering term that was introduced in the social sciences by Hans Selye, “The Father of Modern Stress”, in 1936. According to Selye (1976), an individual reaction to stress occurs in three major stages- a process which is summarised as the ‘General Adaptation Syndrome’. Stress arises when we perceive ourselves as not able to cope with the situation. Stress is any kind of demand due to which behavioral changes occur in a person. These demands may be environmental or individual. Stress is different from pressure. Some amount of pressure is required to get the things done but if pressure is for long time and an individual is unable to cope with it, then stress arises, therefore, pressure is in the situation and stress is in the person. Stress is not necessarily always dysfunctional or negative. It persists with a positive value also. If a challenge can motivate and stimulate a person to innovate and contribute his or her best resulting in better performance then it offers potential gains. Stress with positive value is ‘Eustress’ and the negative form is ‘Distress’ which causes pain, anxiety, depression, and mental tension causing pressure that must be overcome.

Organisational stress being the central theme of the study was defined as a situation where in organisational conditions and factors of the job interacts with the employees to change individual’s physical and mental state so that an individual forces themselves to deviate from the normal system functioning. In simple words, higher the demands and incapability to fulfil those demands is a reason for stress. The implications of stress can be in the form of physical, social, psychological, and behavioural.

The environment presents a set of dynamic conditions or potential stressors that can be perceived as opportunities, constraints and demands. Stress stems from many different factors including organisational causes and personal influence of the major life events and changes. These factors are extra organisational and intra organisational (organisation and individual). If individual is not able to cope with it, then it would result into different forms of reactions due to stress such as pills, alcohol,
absenteeism, mental breakdown, hypertension, etc. Almost every dimension of working life is a source of stress to someone at sometime, but the extent to which it is perceived as stressful by an executive depends upon their personalities and abilities to withstand pressures.

Prolonged exposures to intense stress exert harmful effects on the individual psychological, physiological, and behavioural well being. In addition, a considerable burden is shared by the organisation in the form of absenteeism, turnover, job performance, health care costs and organisational behaviour.

In spite of these dysfunctional ties, it should be recognised that certain amount of stress in organisation is desirable. Prevention and diversion (any activity which changes the focus of attention away from stress producing stimuli) in themselves, are a type of control but when they prove to be infeasible, other methods of regulation may be indicated. When overstressed, one may by analysing the situation, discover that while one cannot avoid exposure to, or divert, certain stressors, one may be able to lessen their impact, or mitigate their effects by improving one’s own resistance. One should determine his or her optimum stress level- the level at which he or she derives the greatest stimulation to creativity or productivity without the undue stress effects. A significant element in life style is balance. Executives who seek to manage their own stress levels will find great aid in balancing their activities, in a frequent change of pace, in conscious utilisation of the practice of diversion. Certain amount of stress is required for alertness and be capable of proper functioning. An organisation completely without stress might make for complacency among its participants, may neglect environmental danger and may soon be out of business.