
Management of Stress and Coping Strategies

Dr. B. Sridevi* & Dr. V. Maheswar,**

**Assistant Professor in Commerce, Govt. Degree College (W), Khammam*

***Manager, LPG Centre, Kothagudem, TSCSCL, Khammam*

INTRODUCTION:

Stressful situation are encountered everyday and at every stage of human development. There is even evidence that stress before birth can influence both the mother and foetus and that it may contribute to obstetric complications and birth defects. From birth trauma right through adolescence, the young meet unavoidable sources of stress. The adolescents faces the problem of adjusting to opposite sex, gaining popularity, choosing a job and want of independence from their parents. The adults face the stress of marriage and raising a family, earning a living and obtaining status in their groups. Retirement and old age are also sources of stress. There are also stressors in our surroundings such as crowding, traffic congestion and noise. A particular stress may affect different people in different ways, but it is interesting that people from different culture see much the same degree of deluge! in many stressful events

No one's life is free of stress. Regardless of how sensible, intelligent, or privileged we are, we will be challenged at times by frustrations, losses, changes & conflicts. Stress comes from negative events and positive events. Stress is one form or another, is inseparable death.

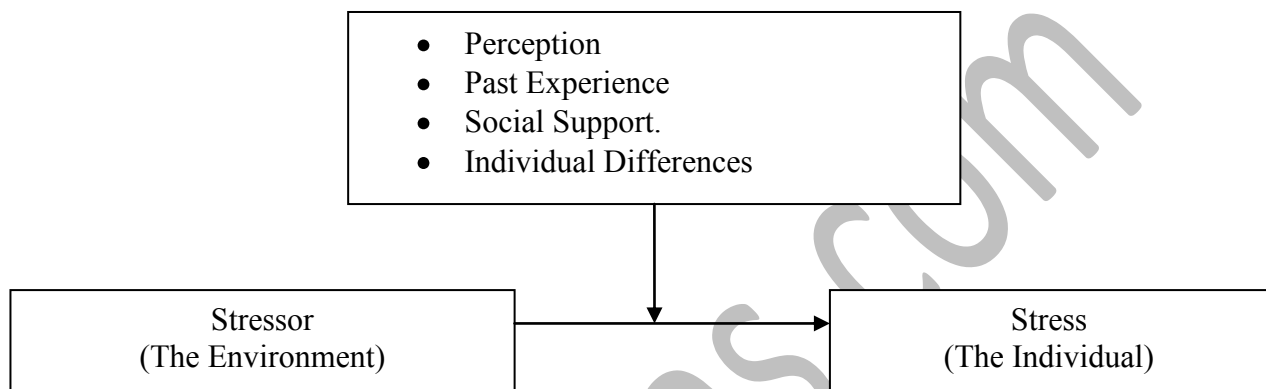
CONCEPT OF STRESS:

There is considerable debate among stress "Experts" about how to adequately define stress. The stress is any event in which environmental demands, internal demands, or both tax or exceed the adaptive resources of an individual, social system or tissue system. Stress is a class of stimuli which threatens a person in some manner and produces disturbances in behaviour and in inner experiences. The term stress often refers to a situation causes people to react in a particular way. Stress is a reaction to something that is happening to an individual. It is one way of coping with the environment and threatening situations that faced daily.

THE STRESS EXPERIENCE:

Not all individual experience stress with same intensity. Some people overact to stressors and get highly stressed. Some others have the stamina, endurance and composure to cope with any stressors. How an individual experiences stress depends on the perception, past experience, social support & individual differences.

Figure 1 The Experience Of Stress

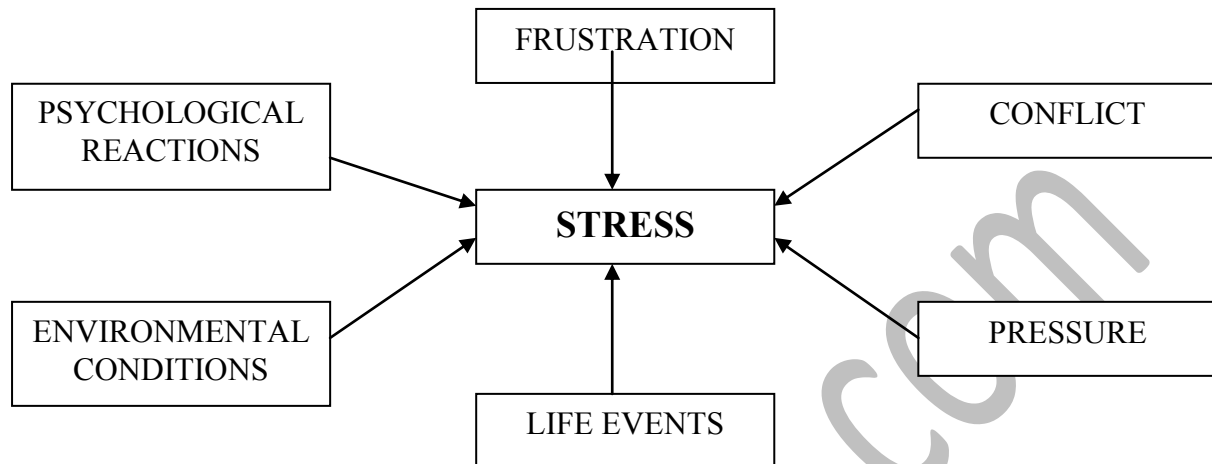


1. **Perception:** Perception refers to a psychological process whereby a person selects and organizes stimuli into a concept of reality. Employee's perception of a situation can influence whether or not they experience stress.
2. **Past Experience:** Whether a person experience stress depends on his/her past experience with a similar stressor. The relationship between experience and stress is also based on reinforcement. Positive reinforcement/previous success in a similar situation can reduce the level of stress that a person experiences under certain circumstances; punishment or past failure under similar conditions can increase stress under the same circumstances.
3. **Social Support:** The presence or absence of other people influences how individuals in the workplace experience stress and respond to stressors. The presence of a co-workers may increase an individual's confidence, allowing that person to cope more effectively with stress conversely, the presence of fellow workers may irritate some people or make them anxious, reducing their ability to cope with stress.
4. **Individual Differences:** Individual differences in motivation, attitudes, personality and abilities also influence whether employees experience work stress, and if they do, how they respond to it.

SOURCE OF STRESS:

The major sources of stress are presented in the Figure 2

Figure 2 The Source Of Stress

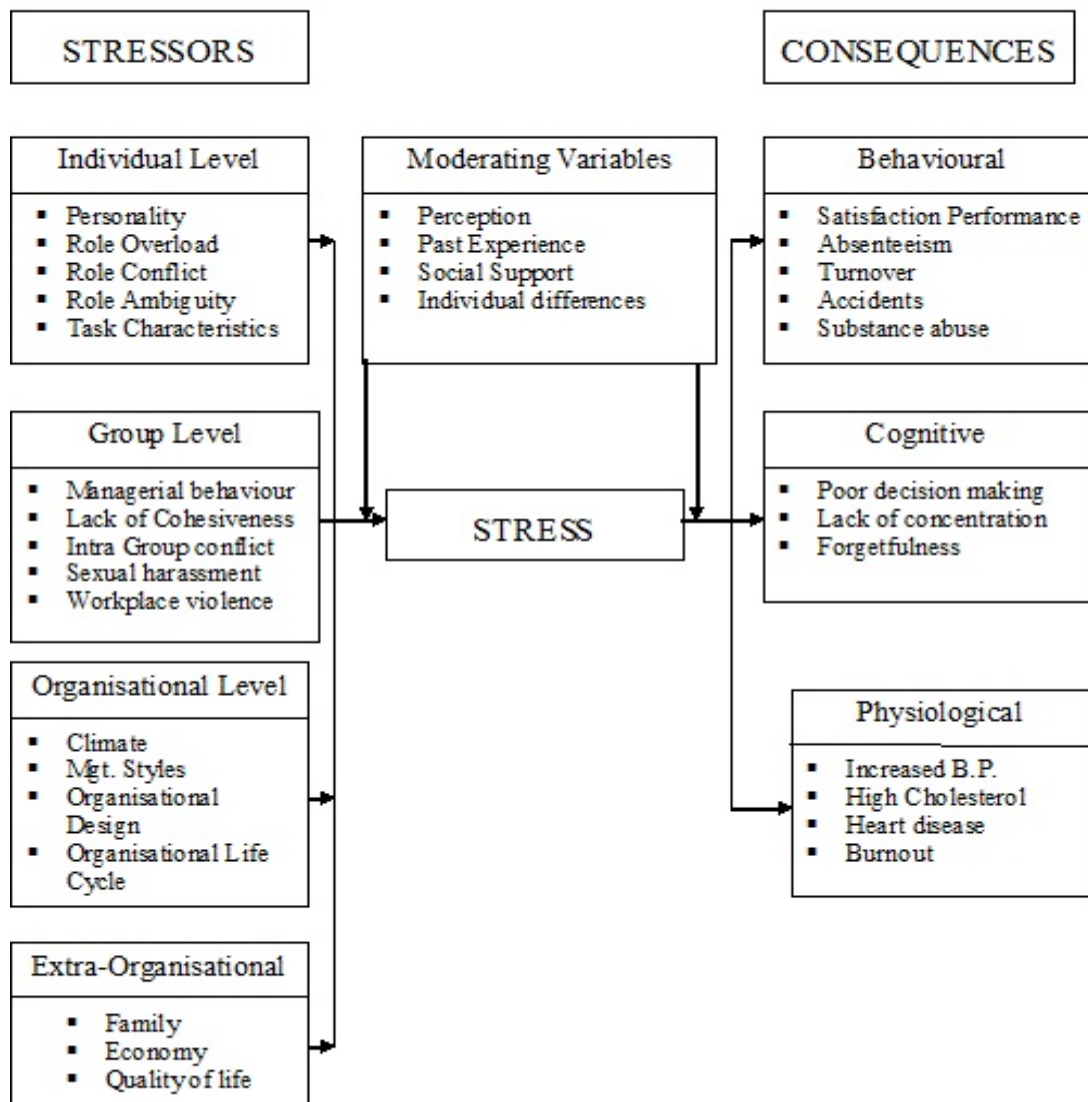


1. **Frustration:** When we are not able to satisfy a motive, frustration results. If the sincere employee is denied promotion he gets frustrated and it is the cause for his stress.
2. **Conflict:** Conflict occurs when two or more motives cannot be satisfied because they interfere with one another.
3. **Pressure:** Stress that arises from the threat of negative events. The pressure of trying to avoid these negative events can sometimes be more stressful than the negative events themselves.
4. **Life Events:** Changes in our lives require readjustment and coping, whether they are negative or positive changes. Importantly, there is also reason to believe that positive life events can be stressful under some
5. **Environmental Conditions:** There is growing evidence that aspects of the environments in which we live can be sources of stress Ex. Temperature, air pollution, noise, humidity, etc.
6. **Psychological Reactions:** The psychological reactions to stress are accompanied by psychological reactions as well. These changes primarily involve emotions, motivations, under stress, we feel anxious, depressed and irritable.

MODEL OF WORK STRESS:

The model of work stress is presented in the Figure 3.

Figure 3 The Model Of Work Stress



COPING STRAGIES WITH STRESS:

The effective methods of coping either remove the source of stress or control our reactions to it.

1. Removing Stress:

One effective way of dealing with stress is to remove the source of stress from our life. If an employee holds a job that is stressful, discussions could be held with the employer that might lead to a reduction in the pressure of the job, or the employee could simply resign. In a variety of ways, coping with stress can take the form of locating its source & eliminating it.

2. Managing Stress Reactions:

When the source of stress cannot realistically be removed or change, an effective option is to manage the reaction to the stress. If an individual may decide to start a new business knowing fully well that the First year or two will be hectic. If the individual would be unwilling, then, to remove the source of the stress (i.e. new business), but could learn to control the reactions to the stress.

STRESS MANAGEMENT:

Stress reduction strategies may be categorized into

- (i) Individual strategies, and (ii) Organizational strategies.

Individual Strategies:

The first step in managing stress is to understand that the individual is exposed to stressors. We cannot manage stress unless we know what causes stress and how these causes are affecting us psychologically, physiologically and organizationally. Fig.4 contains series of stressors. If the employee has any of these signs of stress, he or she needs to adopt coping strategies immediately.

Table 1 Signs Of Stress

Physical Signs	Emotional Signs	Mental Signs	Relational Signs	Spiritual Signs	Behavioural Signs
Appetite Changes	Bad Temper	Lacking humour	Isolation	A feeling of emptiness	Pacing
Headache	Anxiety Nightmares	Lethargy	Intolerance	Inability to forgive	Substance abuse
Insomnia	Irritability	Boredom	Resentment	Cynicism	Nail Biting
Indigestion	Depression	Indecisiveness	Loneliness	Loss of direction	Slumped Posture
Colds	Frustration	Forgetfulness	Nagging	Doubt	Restlessness
Weight Change	Oversensitivity	Poor concentration	Lower sex drive	Need to prove self	Risk aversion
Teeth grinding	Mood Swings	Personality changes	Aggression	Negative Outlook	Eating disorders
Tension	Fearfulness	Stuck in past	Abuse	Gloom	Headaches

The individual strategies to cope with stress include muscle relaxation, biofeedback, meditation, cognitive restructuring and time management.

- (i) **Muscle Relaxation:** This involves slow and deep breathing, a conscious effort to relieve muscle tension and an altered state of consciousness. The technique is inexpensive, may require a trained professional to implement initially.
- (ii) **Biofeedback:** A biofeedback machine is used to train people to detect & control stress-related symptoms such as tense muscles and related blood pressure. The machine translates unconscious bodily signs into a recognizable cue. Muscle relaxation and meditative techniques are then used to alleviate the underlying stress.
- (iii) **Meditation:** Several meditation techniques are used with results being positive and majority of them are derivatives of Eastern philosophies. The most widely practiced technique everywhere in the Transcendental Meditation (TM) of Maharshi Mahesh Yogi.
- (iv) **Cognitive Restructuring:** Cognitive restructuring consists with two steps (i) Maladaptive thought processes that creates stress are identified, and (ii) Replacing these irrational thoughts with more rational ones. Cognitive restructuring would alleviate stress by encouraging a person to adopt a more reasonable belief about the outcomes associated with events.
- (v) **Time Management:** Most of us are poor in time management. The result is feeling of work overload, skipped schedules and attendant tension. The truth is, if one can manage time effectively, he/she can accomplish twice as much as the person who is poorly organized.

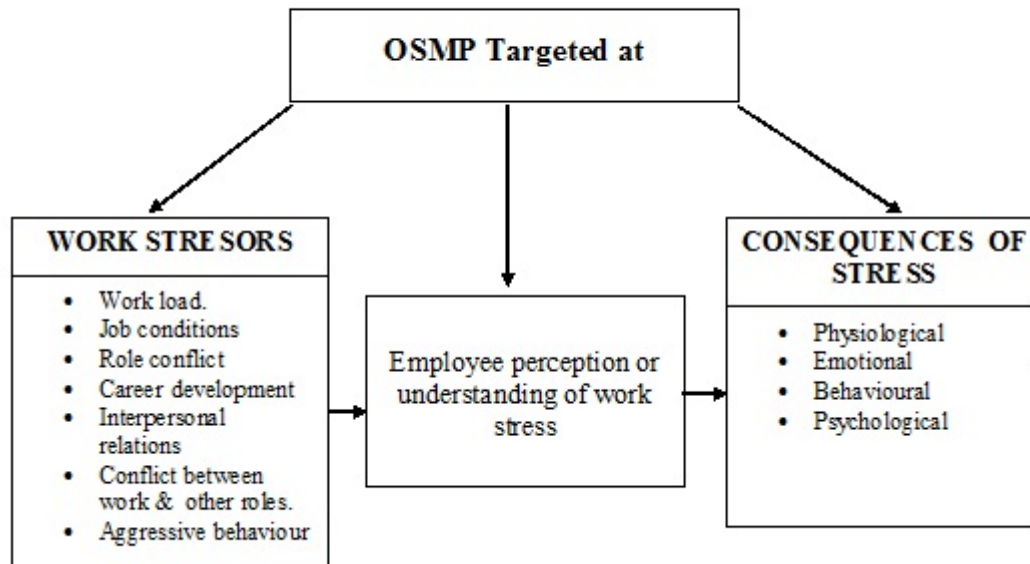
ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGIES:

Now-a-days organizations are also have been developing and implementing stress - reduction strategies. Some of these programmes focus on specific issue or a problem and some are may target a specific group within the organization.

Organisational coping strategies help reduce the harmful effect of stress in three ways.

- a) identify and then modify or eliminate work stressors.
- b) help employees modify their perception & understanding of work stress.
- c) help employees cope more effectively with the consequences of stress.

FIGURE 4 ORGANISATIONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES



OSMP : Organisational Stress Management programmes.

STRATEGIES FOR ELIMINATING STRESS INCLUDE

- Improvement in the work environment.
- Redesigning of job towards elimination of stressors.
- Relaxation towards workloads and deadlines.
- Changes in work schedules.
- Structural organization.
- Introducing of MBO and other goal oriented programmes.
- Allowing employee participation, particularly in planning changes that affect them.
- Conducting of workshops dealing with role clarity & role analysis.

The programmes of stress management targeted at perception and experiences of stress and consequences of stress includes team building, behaviour modification, career counseling, workshops on time management, training in relaxation techniques and physical fitness programmes.

CONCLUSION:

Stress is one's response to a disturbing factor in the environment and the consequences of such reaction. How an individual experiences stress depends on perception, past experience

and social support the individual has stressors originate at the individual, group, organizational or extra - organizational level. Outcomes of stress are very serious. Individual suffers from stress, so also the organization which has to pay in terms of absenteeism, reduced productivity and claims of damages from affected employees. There are individual as well as organizational strategies to cope with the stress. Stress is negatively related to performance. Higher the stress, lower the performance and lower the stress higher the performance.

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