

# Work Stress and its Management

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**Abstract:** Stress is a mental phenomenon. It is a result of excess responsibility which is not maintained by a human being. It starts from the beginning of life when a child is able to understand after getting sense of humour and ends after death. All human beings are under stress of their liabilities. He/she may be student, teacher, parents, employee, employer, administrator, leader, house wife, cultivator, doctor, engineer et al. Reasons are termed as stressors. It is related to different situations, conditions, weather, environmental, individual, organizational and others. Its consequences are physiological, psychological, and behavioral. It is the main source of creating different types of diseases. Medical science is less effective than yoga that has the power to get it free from stress.

**Keywords:** Work Stress, mental phenomenon, physiological, psychological, Medical science.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, demand or resource related to what the individual desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. We discuss its components more closely to it. Stress is typically discussed in a negative context, it is not necessarily bad in and of itself; it also has a positive value. It is an opportunity when it offers potential gain. For example, the superior performance of an athlete or stage performer gives in a "Clutch" situation. Such individuals often use stress positively to rise to the occasion and perform at their maximum. Similarly, many professionals see the pressure of heavy workloads and deadlines as positive challenges that enhance the quality of their work and the satisfaction they get from their jobs.

### **Types of Stressors recently found in research:**

1- Challenge Stressors, and

2- Hindrance Stressors.

1- Challenge stressors or stressors associated with workload, pressure to complete tasks and time urgency operate quite differently from others.

2-- Hindrance Stressors or stressors that keep us from reaching our goals as red tape, office politics, confusion over job responsibilities etc.

Consequently, on the basis of Meta - analysis of responses from 35000 individuals it has been viewed that challenge stress improves job performance in a supportive work environment, whereas hindrance stress reduces job performance in all environments.

## 2. EXISTENCE OF STRESS WITH THE LEVELS OF COMMITMENT

**Strong Level of commitment:** It appears that employees who have a stronger affective commitment to their organization can transfer Psychological stress into greater focus and higher sales performance, whereas employees with low levels of commitment perform worse under stress. And when challenge stress increases, those with high levels of organizational support have higher role based performance, but those with low levels of organizational support do not. More typically stress is associated with demand and resources. Demands are responsibilities, pressures obligations, and uncertainties, individuals face in the workplace. Resources are things within an individual's control that he or she can use to resolve the

demands. Let's discuss what this demands resources model means. When you take a rest at school or you undergo your annual performance review at work, you feel stress because you confront opportunities and performance pressures. A good performance review may lead to promotion greater responsibilities, and a higher salary. A poor review may prevent you from getting a promotion. An extremely poor review might even result in your being fired.

To the extent you can apply resources to the demand on you -- such as being prepared, lacing the exam or review in perspective, or obtaining social support -- you will feel less stress. Research suggests adequate resources help to reduce the stressful nature of demands when demands and resources match .If emotional demands are stressing you, having emotional resources in the form of social support is especially important. If the demands are cognitive -- say information over load then job resources in the form of computer support or information are more important.

Thus, under the demands -resources perspective, having resources to cope with stress is just important in offsetting it as demands are increasing.

### 3. POTENTIAL SOURCES OF STRESS

"A Model of Stress'

Potential Sources:

A- Environmental Factors:. ----- Individual ----- Consequences.

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1- Economic uncertainty.  | 1- Perception.                 |
| 2- Political uncertainty. | 2- Job experience.             |
| 3- Technological change.  | 3- Social support.             |
|                           | 4- Belief in Locus of Control. |

B- Organizational Factors:

- |                           |                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1-Task demands.           | 5-Self efficacy.         |
| 2-Role demands.           | 6- Hostility.            |
| 3- Interpersonal demands. | Experienced Stress ----- |

C- Personal Factors:

- 1-Family problem
- 2- Economic problem.
- 3- Personality Consequences:
  - \* Physiological symptoms:
    - 1- Headaches
    - 2- High Blood Pressure
    - 3- Heart Diseases.
  - \* Psychologically symptoms:
    - 1- Anxiety
    - 2- Depression
    - 3- Decrease in job satisfaction.
  - \* Behavioural symptoms:
    - 1- Productivity
    - 2- Absenteeism & Turnover.

(A) Environmental Factors: Environmental uncertainty influences the design of an organization's structure which influences stress levels among employees in that organization. It has three factors: Economic, Political and Technological.

Changes in the business cycle create economic uncertainties when the economy is contracting; in this case people become increasingly anxious about their job security.

Political uncertainties tend to create stress for entrepreneurs as CEO's in India. When political parties change, business priorities may have to change. Because innovations can make an employee's skills and experience obsolete in a very short time, computers, robotics, automation and similar form of technological change are a threat to many people and cause them stress.

(B) Organizational Factors: Pressures to avoid errors or complete tasks in a limited time, work overload, a demanding and intensive boss, and unpleasant co-workers are a few examples of organizational factors i.e. Tasks, role and interpersonal demands.

1- Task Demands relate to a person's job. They include the design of the job (its degrees of autonomy, task variety, degrees of automation), working conditions, and the physical work layout.

2- Role demands relate to pressures placed on a person as a function of the particular role he or she plays in the organization. Role conflicts create expectations that may be hard to reconcile or satisfy. Role overload occurs when the employee is expected to do more than time permits.

3- Interpersonal demands are pressures created by other employees. Lack of social support from colleagues and poor interpersonal relationship can cause stress, especially among employees with a high social need. For example, negative co-worker and supervisor behaviours, including fights, bullying, incivility, racial harassment and sexual harassment are especially strongly related to stress at work.

(C) Personal Factors: People hold family and personal relationships dear. Marital difficulties, the breaking of a close relationship, and discipline troubles with children create stresses employees often cannot leave at the front door when they arrive at work. Regardless of income level- people who earn Rs. 40 Lakh per year seem to have as much trouble handling their finances as those who earn Rs. 4 Lakh. Some people are poor money managers or have wants that exceed their earning capacity. The economic problems of overextended financial resources create stress and siphon attention away from work. Further it has been found in research that some people may have an inherent tendency to accentuate negative aspects of the world. If it is true, then significant individual factor that influences stress is a person's basic disposition. That is, stress symptoms expressed on the job may actually originate in the person's personality.

Stressors are additive -- when we review stressors individually, it is easy to overlook that stress is an additive phenomenon-- it builds up. Each new and persistent stressor adds to an individual's stress level. To appraise the total amount of stress an individual is under, we have to sum up his or her opportunity stresses, constraint stresses and demand stresses.

Individual Differences: Some people thrive on stressful situations, while others are overwhelmed by them. What differentiates people in terms of their ability to handle stress? What individual difference variables moderate the relationship between potential stressor and experienced stressor? At least there are four variables -- perception, job experience, social support and personality - are relevant. Perception - moderated the relationship between a potential stress condition and an employee's reaction to it. For example, layoffs may cause one person to fear losing his job, while another sees an opportunity to get a large severance allowance and start his own business. So stress potential does not lie in objective conditions; rather, it lies in an employee's interpretation of those conditions.

Experience -- on the job tends to be negatively related to work. A senior employee is likely to be fully adapted and have an experience of less stress while a new employee has to confront more stress on his job.

Social support: Collegial relationships with co-workers or supervisors can suffer the impact of stress. It acts as a palliative, mitigating the negative effects of even high-strain jobs.

Personality traits: Type A personality, in particular the aspect that manifests itself hostility and anger - is associated with increased levels of stress and risk for heart disease. People, who are quick to anger, maintain a persistently hostile outlook, and project a cynical mistrust of others are at increased risk of experiencing stress in situations.

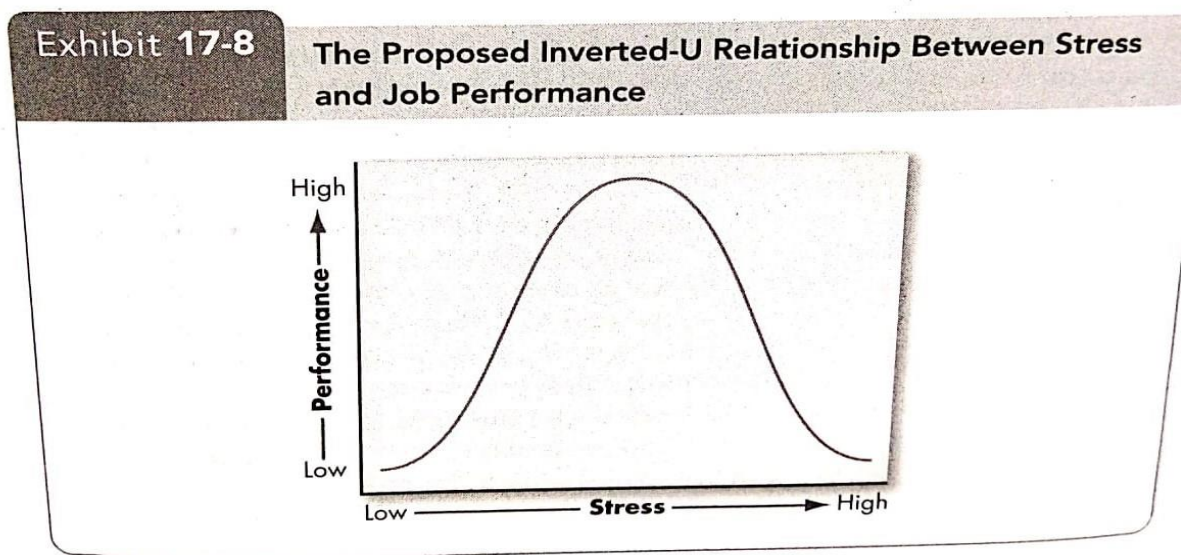
Consequences of Stress: Stress shows itself in a number of ways, such as high blood pressure, ulcers, irritations/irritability, difficulty making routine decisions, loss of appetite, accident proneness, and the like. These symptoms fit under three categories: Physiological, Psychological, and Behavioural symptoms.

A) Physiological symptoms: Researcher's work led to the conclusion that stress could create changes in metabolism, increase heart and breathing rates and blood pressure, bring on headaches and induce heart attacks because stressful job demands increase susceptibility to upper respiratory illness and poor immune system functioning, especially for individuals with low self-efficacy.

B) Psychological symptoms: Job dissatisfaction is "the simplest and most obvious psychological effect" of stress. But stress shows itself in other psychological states for instance, tension, anxiety, irritability, boredom and procrastination. Jobs that make multiple and conflicting demands or that lack clarity about the incumbent's duties, authority and responsibilities increase both stress and dissatisfaction. Similarly, the less control people have over the pace of their work, the greater the stress and dissatisfaction. On the other hand, for those who have an external locus of control, increased job control increases the tendency to experience stress and exhaustion.

C) Behavioural symptoms: Behaviour-related stress symptoms include changes in productivity, absence, and turnover, as well as changes in eating habits, increased smoking or consumption of alcohol, rapid speech, fidgeting, and sleep disorders. Research has clarified this stress relationship as follows:

**The proposed inverted -- U Relationship between Stress and Job performance.**



This states that Low to moderate levels of stress stimulate the body and increase its ability to react. Individuals then often perform their tasks better, more intensely, or more rapidly. But too much stress places unattainable demands on a person, which result in lower performance.

The inverted -U may also describe our reaction to stress over time as well as to change in stress intensity. That is, even moderate levels of stress can have a negative influence over the long term as the continued intensity of the stress wears down the individual and saps energy resources.

**Managing Stress:**

Because low to moderate levels of stress can be functional and lead to higher performance, management may not be concerned when employees experience them. Employees, however, are likely to perceive even low levels of stress as undesirable. It is not unlikely, therefore, for employees and management to have different notions of what constitutes an acceptable level of stress on the job.

**There are two approaches to this:**

1) Individual approaches: An employee can take personal responsibility for reducing stress levels. Individual strategies that have proven effective include time management techniques, increased physical exercise, relaxation training and expanded social support networks.

**A few of the best - known time management principles are:**

- 1-- Making daily lists of activities to be accomplished.
- 2--Prioritizing activities by importance and urgency.
- 3-- Scheduling activities according to the priorities set.
- 4--Knowing your daily cycle and handling the most demanding parts of the job.

Physicians views are - aerobics, walking, jogging, swimming, riding a cycle, as a way to deal with excessive stress levels . In addition to the meditation, hypnosis and biofeedback, meeting with friends, family or work colleagues to have a frequently talk etc. also play a role to reduce excessive stress levels.

B) Organizational Approaches: Several factors cause stress particularly task and role demands - controlled by management, - can be modified or changed. Strategies to consider include improved personnel selection , and job placement , training , realistic goal setting , redesign of jobs , increased employees involvement improved organizational communication employee sabbaticals , and corporate wellness programs.



This group of Indian working women participate in a yoga class as a way to deal with excessive stress levels caused by long working hours and trying to achieve a work life balance. Working women in India have high levels of stress because in Indian culture women are expected to take more responsibility for family matters than in many other cultures. As an individual's approach to managing stress, yoga is a non - competitive physical exercise that combines stretching, mental imagery, breathing control, physical postures, and meditation. Yoga reduces stress, anxiety, and muscles tension, provides a mental diversion from work pleasures, and promotes physical well- being by lowering blood pressure and heart rate.

**Stress -- In considering global differences in stress, there are three questions to answer:**

- 1 -Do the cause of stress vary across countries?
- 2 - Do the outcomes of stress vary across cultures? And
- 3 - Do the factors that lessen the effects of stress vary by culture?



**Responses from different countries:**

- 1- Avoid job of high stress -- According to the U.S. centres for disease control and prevention.
- 2- If you do experience stress at work, try to find a job that has plenty of control and supportive co-workers.
- 3- Don't assume the exercise rules out a financially rewarding career: "Money is the top stressor by American".

**4. QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

- 1- What is stress and what are the possible sources of stress?
- 2 - What are the consequences of stress?
- 3- What are the organizational and individual approaches it managing stress?

**ENDNOTES**

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