Chapter Scheme

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Introduction

“I cannot and should not be cured of stress, but merely taught to enjoy it”
Without stress, there would be no life”- Dr. Hans Selye.

1.1: What is stress?
Dr. Hans Selye, known as the father of Stress says - Stress is derived from Latin word “Stringere”, means to draw tight. Stress was popularly used in seventeenth century to mean hardship, strain and adversity. It was used in eighteenth and nineteenth century to denote force, pressure, strain, or strong efforts with reference to an object or person.

Modern age terms stress as an indirect influence on people of every all walk of life. No one is immune to stress. Right form child birth to death, an individual is exposed directly or indirectly to various stressful situations.

“Stress occurs when there is a perceived imbalance between pressure and coping resources for a particular situation”- Jane Cranwell – Ward and Alyssa Abbey.

Dr DM Pestonjee - Stress is the emotional and physical strain caused by our response to pressure from the outside world. Stress was considered to be a dynamic, fluctuating and changing process of adaptation, defined as being the interaction between an individual's coping skills and the demands made on that person by the environment, internal as well as external.

Stress is one of the direct causes of the commonest and most lethal psychological and physiological illness that affects mankind. Quality of work life has significant repercussions on the equality if emotional life and in the socio-emotional and affective balance that may affect stress and lead to a variety of illnesses, Individual factors – such as personal values, needs, skills as well as personality and aspirations determine each individual’s susceptibility to stress - Simon Dolan.
In 1946, in its constitution, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". In more recent years, this statement has been modified to include the ability to lead a "socially and economically productive life."

Stress is the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them. It arises when they worry that they can’t cope. Stress is the wear and tear our minds and bodies experience as we cope with our continually changing environment.

There is considerable evidence that most managers report feeling work related stress, and the recent environment is making things worse. Globalization and strategic alliances have led to a dramatic increase in executive travel stress and relocation, other important environmental impact of advanced information technology has given birth to the new term techno stress. Data indicates that the exploding technology has created the following problems for today’s employees at all levels: Loss of privacy, information inundation, erosion of face to face contact, continually having to learn new skills and being passed over for promotion because of their lack of knowledge

1.2. What stress is not?

1. Stress is not simply anxiety – Anxiety operates solely in the emotional and psychological sphere, whereas stress operates there and also in the physiological sphere; hence stress may be accompanied by anxiety, but the two should not be equated.

2. Stress is not simply nervous tension – Like anxiety, nervous tension may result from stress, but the two are not the same.

3. Stress is not necessarily something damaging, bad or to be avoided – Eustress is not damaging or bad and is something people should seek out rather than avoid; the key of course, is how the person handles the stress. Stress is inevitable; distress may be prevented or can be effectively controlled.
1.3. Types of Stress
Stress can also have a positive effect, spurring motivation and awareness, providing the stimulation to cope with challenging situations. Stress also provides the sense of urgency and alertness needed for survival when confronting threatening situations. Stress can also have negative effect such as headaches, digestive problems, skin complaints, insomnia and ulcers. Excessive prolonged and unrelieved stress can have a harmful effect on mental, physical and spiritual health.

**Eustress** is defined as stress that is healthy or gives one a feeling of fulfillment. Where stress enhances function (physical or mental, such as through strength training or challenging work) it may be considered Eustress. Causes of this type of stress include meeting a challenge, coming in first or winning, getting a promotion, marriage, holidays, buying a new home, going on a roller coaster ride, etc.

The bad kind of stress which is dysfunctional in nature is known as **Distress**. Causes of this type of stress include work demands, death of a family member or friend, financial issues, etc.

**Hyperstress** is the type of negative stress that comes when a person is forced to undertake or undergo more than he or she can take. A stressful job that overworks an individual will cause that individual to face hyperstress. A person who is experiencing hyperstress will often respond to even little stressors with huge emotional outbreaks. It is important for a person who thinks they might be experiencing hyperstress to take measures to reduce the stress in their lives, because hyperstress can lead to serious emotional and physical repercussions.

**Hypostress** stands in direct opposite to hyperstress. Hypostress is basically insufficient amount of stress. That is because hypostress is the type of stress experienced by a person who is constantly bored. Someone in an unchallenging job, such as a factory worker performing the same task over and over, will often experience hypostress. The effect of hypostress is feelings of restlessness and a lack of inspiration.
Some examples of Good to Bad Stress**:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Good</th>
<th>The Bad</th>
<th>The Ugly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get married</td>
<td>Break a leg</td>
<td>Nasty car accident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have children</td>
<td>Spouse loses job</td>
<td>Bankruptcy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy a new home</td>
<td>Kid in trouble</td>
<td>Divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go on vacation</td>
<td>Lose wallet</td>
<td>Loved one dying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Job</td>
<td>In-laws coming</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
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1.4. The Signs of Stress

The following chart will explain the reactions according to time:

- Level 1: Early warning signs
- Level 2: Psychological Symptoms
- Level 3: Emotional Symptoms
- Level 4: Physical Symptoms
- Level 5: Behavioral Symptoms
- Level 6: Breakdown (inability to cope)

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**Figure 1: LEVELS OF STRESS**

Early warning signs: uneasiness, tense, hassled, flustered, uptight, under pressure, taut, overloaded, about to explode, without any sense of humor.
Psychological Symptoms: Inability to concentrate, difficulty in making simple decisions, difficulty in making rational judgments, forgetful, making rash decisions, loss of self confidence, negative self talk, mental tiredness, memory lapses, undue feeling being under time pressure, frustration, depression, lost sense of humor, loss of sex drive.

Emotional Symptoms: Feelings of anxiety and panic, irritability, angry outbursts, increased cynicism, feeling isolated, defensive and over sensitive, fear of rejection, fear of failure, feeling of hopelessness, feeling of hostility, feeling of guilt, resentment, panic attacks, feeling of depression, nightmares.

Physical Symptoms: Sweaty palms and cold fingers, dry mouth, muscle tension, shaking hands, stiff jaw, high pitched voice, difficulty swallowing, cramps, palpitations, rapid pulse, dizziness, faintness, ringing in the ears, hyperventilation, pins and needles, trembling, restless leg syndrome, physical tiredness, numbness, headache, chest pain, indigestion, heartburn, frequent urination, impotency.

Behavioral Symptoms: Heavy reliance on alcohol, reliance on smoking, on tranquilizers, changes in eating patterns, increased or decreased food intake, avoiding people, social withdrawal, phobic avoidance of certain situations, becoming a workaholic with no relaxation, absenteeism, hair pulling (trichotillomania), obsessive or compulsive behavior (frequent hand washing).

Learning how to spot the signs of stress - One can easily learn to take steps to reduce the pressure one is under before stress sets in long term and one’s physical and emotional health starts to suffer. Stress affects people in different ways. Some are likely to develop physical stress, some experience serious psychological or emotional problems while some display serious behavioral changes.
1.5: Occupational Stress

According to Beehr, during recent times, the concept of occupational stress has gone from being a ‘buzzword’ to becoming a norm among many corporations worldwide. The presence of occupational stress has devastating effects on corporate culture, productivity and profitability and has led to the demise of many potential market giants. Occupational stress is not selective. It is present in both large and small organizations, both profit and non profit.

Stress is the second largest occupational disease after musculoskeletal disorders. Stress accounts for 90 million lost work days annually in the US alone. $150 billion is spent annually for psychiatric treatment, lost productivity and disability payments due to occupational stress related illnesses. Studies have shown that women are more likely to be victims of occupational stress than men (Kalkar). Occupational stress is studied and treated by many disciplines and these disciplines have tended to define it, study it, and treat it in their own separate ways. Stress has many faces, perhaps due to the interest the topic generates among people with widely varying perspectives.

“It is necessary for all the interested parties to recognize that occupational stress is a real risk and one that is deeply rooted in the workplace, industrialists, workers and governments will have to step up preventive measures in this field. Good stress management practices in the workplace are required for tackling this ever-increasing problem” (Anna Diamantopoulou- European Commissioner for Employment and Social affairs).

1.6. The Causes of Occupational Stress:
The antecedents of stress or the so called stressors, affecting today’s employees are summarized as:

- Extraorganisational Stressors,
- Organizational Stressors,
- Group Stressors and
- Individual Stressors.
**Extraorganizational Stressors:**

It is clear that job stress is not limited just to things that happen inside the organization or, during the working hours. Extraorganizational Stressors include societal / technological change, globalization, the family, relocation, economical and financial conditions, race and class, residential or community conditions.

**Organizational Stressors:**

In an organization stressors can be categorized as: Administrative policies and Strategies, Organizational structure and design, Organizational Processes, and working conditions. Some specific examples are; the organizational stressors include responsibility without authority, inability to voice complaints, inadequate recognition, and lack of clear job description or reporting relationships. Some stressors are those which affect individuals directly causing damage or injury (job specifications, issues with salary, bonus, leave, union problems).

**Group Stressors:**

Group stressors can be categorized as:

1. **Lack of group cohesiveness:** It has become very clear that cohesiveness, or togetherness is very important to employees, especially at the lower levels of organizations, lack of cohesiveness is very stress producing.

2. **Lack of Social Support:** Employees are greatly affected by the support of one or more members of a cohesive group. By sharing their problems and joys with others, they are much better off. If this type of support is lacking for an individual then the situation is very stressful.

**Individual Stressors:**

The sum of stressors i.e. Extraorganisational, Organizational and group all eventually get down to the individual level.
1.7 Organizational Stressors

**Administrative Policies and Strategies**
- Downsizing, Merit pay plans
- Rotating Work Shifts
- Advanced Technology

**Organizational Structure and Design**
- Line and Staff Conflicts
- Specialization
- Role Ambiguity and conflicts
- Restrictive and Untrusting culture

**Organizational Processes**
- Tight Controls
- Only Downward communication
- Centralized decision making
- Lack of participation in decisions

**Working Conditions**
- Crowded work area
- Noise, heat or cold
- Polluted air
- Strong odor
- Unsafe dangerous conditions
- Poor lighting
- Physical strain and mental strain
- Radiation

**Figure 2: Organizational Stressors**

**Climate within the organization:** Every organization has its own personality, its own climate. The conditions the behavior of the individuals who make up the organization, thought it is difficult to appraise since there are no scientifically valid tools available to measure it. The climate may or may not be tense, relaxed, cordial, and so on. All this produces different levels of stress.
Size and Management style- The most common source of stress arises from the combination of the organizations size and how formal its functioning is, in other words, bureaucracy. Many studies have shown the highly bureaucratic organizations try to mold individuals conform to a stereotype.

Hierarchical Structure- In all hierarchies where there is an unequal distribution of power, the higher the level, the greater the tendency of autocratic control of a few at the expense of others. Managers are in a good position to demand behaviors which exceed the ability of the individuals to tolerate such demands.

Technology- The incorporation of new technologies has important implications for numerous work-related and organizational aspects. Changes develop in the tasks and job roles, in the supervision, in the structures and in the organizational style. These can make way for new stressors in the workplace while eliminating others.

Irrational deadlines- Everyone knows the impact produced by the establishment of unreachable goals given the time allotted to complete them.

Organizations have to be able to give quick and effective responses to change, this pressure is passé on to the workers and creates a stressful situation at both the organizational and personal levels, a stressed organization is an organization where there is an imbalance between its objectives and its internal and external realities (corporate strategy, human resources, climate, values, economic results, competitors, etc) at the same time , the stressed worker suffers from an imbalance, in this case between his or her expectations and professional interest and the reality of his or her individual work conditions (responsibilities, autonomy and control, incentive programs, career plans, professional development etc.)
1.8 Outcomes of Stress in the Workplace -- Individual’s Strains:

Psychological, Physiological and Behavioral effects of workplace stress:
A meta analysis focusing on the two classic role stressors, role conflict and role ambiguity, illustrates the emphasis of workplace stress researchers on psychological strains very well. Eleven of the fifteen outcomes examined were psychological or emotional strains (Jackson and Schuler, 1985). In addition, Jex and Beehr (1991) added that relationship between the types of work stressors that organizational psychologists study and psychological strains are stronger than the relationships between these stressors and other types of strains.

Employee’s withdrawal as an organizational consequence of job stress:
The thinking regarding the relationships of withdrawal behaviors to occupational stressors is quite simple and straightforward and it is very similar to the thinking about the relationship between job satisfaction and withdrawal. Basically, if the workplace is unpleasant, the employee is expected to want to get out and stay out of the workplace.

Three are at least four types of employee withdrawal that could logically be related to occupational stress, given the simple idea that stressful occupations are painful and there will be a tendency to want to get away from them. The four types of withdrawal are lateness, absenteeism, turnover and psychological withdrawal, and they tend to be positively and moderately related to each other (Beehr and Gupta, 1978) ⁶.

a. Tardiness as an organizational consequence of job stress:
Research on tardiness as a consequence of occupational stress has been rare. Jamal (1984), found that the self-reported job stressors, role ambiguity, role overload, role conflict, and resource inadequacy were all positively related to record tardiness. If job stress is painful and causes people to be slow getting ready for work, driving to work, and so forth, then they might be expected to be late to work more often than others who do
not experience stress at work. In general, there is little research on lateness or tardiness in industrial and organizational psychology outside of the job stress field.

b. Absenteeism as an organizational consequence of job stress
Not coming to work because of occupational stress seems to be one way to avoid the pain of stress. Research on absenteeism has usually found only weak relationships between absenteeism and job attitudes such as job satisfaction (or dissatisfaction). There are at least two reasons—
First, the intensity of the negative response of job stress is stronger than attitudes such as dissatisfaction, although it is rarely diagnosed thoroughly in the job stress research. Psychological strains are supposed to include clinical depression and anxiety and any number of mental health disorders.

Secondly, companies recognize that some absenteeism is officially due to illness and it is often labeled this way in the company’s official records as sick days. If job stress is a cause to these illnesses, then there should be some relationship between job stressors and absenteeism that is classified as sick days.

c. Turnover as an organizational consequence of job stress:
As with absenteeism, the logic of an expected association between job stress and turnover is the basic withdrawal hypotheses, that is, if it is painful to be at work, then people will try to avoid the workplace. Turnover is logically a more extreme step than simply staying away from work for a day (as with some absenteeism). One approach to turnover suggests that turnover is a rational decision, that is turnover occurs because the employee has better alternatives.

d. Psychological withdrawal as an organizational consequence of job stress:
In addition to lateness, absenteeism and turnover, it can be argued that a more mild form of withdrawal form the workplace is psychological withdrawal (Beehr and Gupta, 1978), that is although an employee is physically present at work, he or she is absent in spirit. Lack of interest in the job might tend to lead people to be absent in spirit and thought.
1.9 The General Adaptation Syndrome: Dr Hans Selye’s view

The body’s generalized attempt to defend itself against noxious agents is known as the GAS - General Adaptation Syndrome. Extrapolating from his animal findings to human, Selye describes the GAS model in terms of three stages Alarm, Reaction and Resistance - 

**Alarm Stage**: The body initially responds to a stressor with changes that lower resistance. 

**Resistance**: If the stressor continues, the body mobilizes to withstand the stress and return to normal 

**Exhaustion**: Ongoing, extreme stressors eventually deplete the body’s resources so we function at less than normal.

*Source: Brannon Linda and Feist Jess, Introduction to Health Psychology*
The general adaptation syndrome (Hans Selye):

Stage 1: Stage of alarm
(The organism identifies an environmental demand as threatening)
Anxiety or Fear, Sorrow or Depression, Shock or Confusion.

Stage 2: Stage of resistance
(Organism gathers resources to cope with the demand)
Aggression, Regression, Repression, Withdrawal, Fixation.

Stage 3: Stage of exhaustion
(Demand is not met and resources are worn out - serious damage may occur)
Physiological, (e.g. headaches, cold flu)
Psychological (e.g. Severe Depression)
Interpersonal (e.g. end of relationships)
Inability to defend against stressors

Stress as a response:
- Stress is seen as a physiological response to an external demand
- The GAS may affect a subsystem or an entire organism
- Criticism: too simplistic, neglects stress as a cause

Stress as a Cause:
- Emphasis on sources of stress (stressors), i.e. cause/factor that may be causing stress
- Examples: objective features of work and work roles
- Criticism: too simplistic neglects the frequency, duration, intensity and severity of stressful events assume that all individuals react similarly to similar situations.
1.10 The Coping Strategies

Table 1: Individually and Organizationally targeted treatments of Occupational stress:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Target</th>
<th>Organizational Target</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meditation</td>
<td>Mastery of environment – including stressors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage desires, ambitions, drives</td>
<td>Leaving stressful situation permanently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase self understanding</td>
<td>Human relations training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization provide health services</td>
<td>Planning, organizing day’s activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vicarious stress reduction (e.g. audience activities)</td>
<td>Find more suitable job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation Techniques</td>
<td>Redesign jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of less than perfection</td>
<td>Alter organizational structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tension release (laughing, crying, attacking)</td>
<td>Change evaluation, reward system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking medical, psychological, other professional help</td>
<td>Change work schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempts to alter behavior or personality</td>
<td>Clarify roles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of biofeedback techniques</td>
<td>Refine selection and placement procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Think of work as less important</td>
<td>Clarify career paths and promotion criteria improve organizations communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting sufficient rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quitting drug intake</td>
<td>Other strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increased religious activity</td>
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Source: Treating occupational stress: (Terry A Beehr)