Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter is presented under the following headings:

5.1 Summary of personal information of respondents
5.2 Summary of opinions of respondents on the various sets of questionnaires
5.3 Conclusions
5.4 Two models for stress reduction as developed by the researcher
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5.1 Summary of personal information of respondents

The respondents were selected from two types of industries i.e., Manufacturing and Service Sector. There were more males than females. Majority of respondents were between 22 to 30 years, some between the age group of 31 to 45 years of age and only few were above 46 years of age. Almost half belonged to senior level of management, some to the middle level and only few to the junior level of management. Most respondents were post graduates, some were graduates, few had studied up to the level of diploma and few did not disclose their education level. Regarding their work experience, it ranged from less than 1 year to above 15 years.

Regarding their marital status, more were unmarried than married. There were no divorcees, and some did not disclose their marital status. A lesser number of respondents lived in joint families, most had nuclear families. It was interesting to note that only 4% of respondents answered that they were suffering from illnesses, 26% responded that they were fit and fine, 70% did not respond to this question. The respondents who used drugs as medication for ailments were only 2%, 25% said they did not use any drugs, 73% did not disclose at all. Regarding the use of addictive substances, some respondents smoked, 1% chewed tobacco, 19% consumed alcohol, 20% did not use any of these addictions and 51% did not disclose. Respondents who practiced yoga were 18% and those who preferred the gymnasium were 25%. Those who preferred meditation were 5% whereas 2% preferred martial arts. Those who do not practice any of the above mentioned fitness activities were 10% and respondents who did not disclose were 40%.
5.2 Summary of opinions of respondents about the various sets of questionnaires

Causes of Stress–Organizational and Personal

Majority of respondents (30.19%) agreed that they were subjected to organizational stress. 25% were neutral and had no opinion. It was interesting to note that 36% disagreed, meaning that they did not experience any organizational stress. These respondents opined that organizational environment was suitable and they could cope even if stringent work conditions existed. They were comfortable with the safety practices provided by the organizations, job conditions were suitable and friendly and resources and communication were supportive. Respondents were of the opinion that personal causes of stress were taking a toll on individual life. Some agreed that high degree of policing and harassment exists in their organization. 23% were neutral and gave no opinion. A majority of respondents felt that there was no stress. They were of the opinion that they were not living in isolation, and that they were not burdened by organizational targets.

Consequences of Stress – Physical, Psychological and Behavioral

Majority of respondents felt that the consequences of stress did not cause physical harm. Of the respondents who agreed to physical consequence of stress, 30% said they had cramps and muscle spasms. 28% had constant tiredness, 24% had frequent heart burn and indigestion and 19% were unable to sit still. Only few respondents (19%) agreed to having psychological consequences of stress. 17.55% were neutral and had no opinion. Majority 63%) disagreed to being affected by stress, they reported that they were psychologically sound. These respondents were of the opinion that anxiety is controlled, no dependence on alcohol and no feelings of hatred, loneliness or inability to cope. 21% employees felt that they experienced behavioral changes due to consequences of stress in their organizations. These were suppressed anger, loss of interest in other people, failure as a parent etc. 16.6% were neutral. However, majority (almost 63%) disagreed, saying they had no problem in terms of experiencing any irritability with colleagues, lack of interest in work life, any decision making problems on the job situations, a feeling of being alone, inferior etc.
Coping with Stress

A majority (57%) of employees felt that they were able to cope with stress by doing self counseling and thinking positively. They also had the opinion that coping strategies designed by the organization were going very well and employees were benefited by these strategies. 22.33% of employees were neutral. Around 20% strongly disagreed to the fact that coping is not possible. Hence, from the above it can be seen that employees are comfortable if expert guidance is provided during work hours. Counseling helps and benefits stressed employees by changing attitudes. Practicing ancient techniques like yoga and meditation help and employees recover from the stressful condition. Conducting self analysis helps to a large extent since knowing gaps in oneself and overcoming them is a good strategy. Coping also helps in maintaining good family and work life balance. Employees can also take the help of natural therapy so coping with stress is easy. It can be concluded that an organization’s prime responsibility is to identify the stressed lot, counsel them and make work environment easy to work in and be productive throughout.

Role of HR – Counseling and Policies

The role of HR in combating stress in terms of counseling is agreed to by around 51% respondents. 25.5% were neutral in their opinion. 20% disagreed to the fact that HR can play a role in combating stress. HR interventions were very well accepted and hence tend to prove as remedies to overcome stress. Through the strategies that are implemented, the subsidies and incentives that are provided, organizations are trying to develop employees holistically thus leading to organizational development.

52% employees agreed that their organization’s HR policies are useful and make work life better and working environment more interesting to work with. 28.78% employees were neutral and had no opinion. About 20% disagreed that HR policies were really useful. They felt that if the organizational policies are implemented thoroughly, then holistic development is guaranteed. To implement these policies, a lot of cooperation from employees, management and systems are required to go hand in hand and only then can they become effective.
5.3 Conclusions

The conclusions of the study are presented as

1. Conclusions – derived out of the opinions of the respondents and researcher
2. Researcher’s perceptions about HR interventions to be made to reduce stress

a. Every individual has some amount of stress and expects the HR department to work as a facilitator in stress reduction - Respondents were of the opinion that there is existence of stress within the organization and hence employees require HR interventions to overcome stress. The HR must diagnose the stress levels at early stages and provide the proper facilities and time to undergo stress management sessions.

b. Stress is due to organizational causes - There is a good talent pool of skills available in organizations, qualified and with professional skills. The question is, are there the right employers who will take care of them? When good manpower is under stress, confidence is lost and in turn the industry loses good manpower. High stress leads to high turnover and retention strategies do not operate in stressful situations. This is a signal for the human resources team, and a big challenge for management as a whole.

c. All HR departments must intervene in stress reduction - Employees felt that the HR department did not intervene in stress reduction as it should. The existence of politics in the organization creates stress, training is not adequate and counseling is hardly provided to employees. All this leads to poor job satisfaction among employees. Moreover, there is high ego and arrogance among some employees, hence team building is not possible at all which leads to clashes and leads to staggered groups.

d. Employees felt that Individual Strategies will facilitate coping with stress - Employees opined that if the anxiety level is controlled and if they are not dependent on alcohol or other drugs; they can easily cope with difficult situations. Employees were of the opinion that due to stress if anxiety level overshoots, then, if coping strategies are implemented fast then they feel stress is controlled, then there is no need to depend on alcohol or other drugs, or look for other types of psychological ventilation.
e. **Due to stress in the organizations there is poor quality of performance** - Employees feel difficult tasks are taking a toll creating lot of stress, hence one needs to have targets according to human limits. It may be physical work or psychological or a combination of both. Organizational politics is also one strong cause of stress since it contributes to individual’s personal life and creates a lot of negative stress, which finally leads to poor quality of work and output thereof. Since individuals are eager to resolve conflicts and issues that arise out of dirty politics, but if it continues, the creative talent and skill is lost in the process and hence the poor performance on the job.

f. **Lack of supportive work culture** – Many respondents had the opinion that there must be good and supportive work culture otherwise the job conditions becomes difficult. It is not possible to work in a suffocating atmosphere. Unless the climate is conducive, results are not productive.

g. **Young age executives are under Stress due to Recession and economic threats** – Majority of respondents were in the age group of 22 to 30 years. They felt that they are affected by global slowdown and recession. Since they are at the first level of the management pyramid, when cost cutting takes place then they are the first ones to face the music of turnover.

h. **There is no Stress Policy adopted by Industries to combat stress** - HR department should develop and publish a policy document on stress at work. It was observed that many organizations do not have any stress policy for their respective organizations, Human resource department must create a policy manual where such severe cases are taken care of with proper diagnosis and treatment and needed when providing compensation for employees. Respondents felt that since there was no stress policy for the industry, stress management was not carried out effectively. Like safety and welfare acts, stress policies are essential and it differs from country to country. The US and UK and many leading economies practice a welfare code by developing a Stress Policy for employees for their organizations and give them space and provision to combat stress and tools to overcome stress. Indian industries are yet to adopt such a measure.
i. Many recent changes in work practices have led to organizational stress – Many employees were of the opinion that the recent changes in work practices have direct impact on job description, skills and job profiles of employees. Since the industries have accepted high competition and rigorous challenges (The global world), the question is who will contribute? Employees have to update their skills, technology, ERP, software, systems etc. To deal with international clients and customers and to match their technical specifications and expectations leads to stress and hence organizational stress.

j. Too much work to handle and insufficient time to complete the job/ task – Respondents have the opinion that there is too much workload. It becomes the prime responsibility of the employees to meet and complete the targets in time, (industries are using squeeze in technique to get the work done) and this leads to stressful situations, and work culture becomes suffocating. Employees’ opinion was that they find it difficult to complete the job / task / project within time. Employees opined that they had too much work pressure when many tasks were to be completed at the same time, and that was creating stress which disturbed the entire work culture. A stressed individual will always do a slow job than an employee who is fast in his approach.

l. No opportunity for personal development – Every employee expects some growth and development, i.e. climb the organizational ladder and if this is not accomplished, the ensuing stress leads to discomfort and low job satisfaction.

m. Length of time commuting between home and work - Most employees agreed to the fact that they experienced stress due to commuting to work and back. Those who stay in rural parts find it difficult since it takes long time to reach office, those who are in urban and semi urban said that they were stressed due to heavy traffic and traffic jams, blockades due to accidents or road widening etc.

n. Choosing to keep working even when sick. After yoga, meditation or other fitness programmes, employees can handle stress or anger – Employees said they keep working even when they are sick and medically unfit. Since such kind of attitude affects
health negatively, creates stress and accordingly quality of work or output will suffer. Employees felt tense and irritated when stressed and exhausted because of deadlines, job specifications, routine meetings and they live in constant mental tension. Majority of employees are of the opinion that yogic practices, meditation or other fitness programmes can help reduce stress. It can also help in managing anger and anxiety and other psychological disorders.

These results are in accordance with those of Kalkar (2009) who found four major reasons which create work stress related to personal development as too much work to handle, insufficient opportunity for personal development, insufficient time to complete the job/task and feeling surrounded by people who were not one’s type.

**H.R. Interventions and strategies for Stress Reduction**

As an outcome of the study, the researcher is of the opinion that HR should intervene and formulate strategies for reducing stress. Signs of occupational stress are an indication of problems with management systems, which should be seen as an opportunity for workplace performance and productivity improvement. The management of occupational stress should involve a process of -

- Identifying and assessing the actual and potential risks
- Developing management strategies to eliminate or control these risks
- Learning to understand responses of self and colleagues to stressful situations
- Stress management program must result in --
  - Reduce the incidence of other workplace injuries
  - Reduce workers compensation insurance premiums
  - Reduce absenteeism
  - Reduce workplace conflict
  - Improve workplace communication
  - Improve customer service
  - Improve workload and other resource management issues
  - Improve staff commitment and morale.
Some of the H.R. Interventions and strategies for Stress Reduction should include:

**Organizational Forecasting:** Managers and organizations should do their best to understand what stress is and is not, and to detect it early before individuals reach distress. Where organizations do not monitor stress levels, the individuals should recognize it and should manage it for themselves.

**Managerial awareness:** Managers should understand that stress had wide ranging, short-term and long term effects, and these effects may be very different from what they themselves experience when they are stressed. There are still some managers (directors and board members) who say that they do not believe stress exists. When stress levels rise overall in organizations, stress tends to be infectious, since the behavior of one person can put pressure on others. Line managers do not have a responsibility for every team member’s happiness, but they should have an interest in keeping employee health and morale at optimum levels. Therefore, they need to develop an awareness of and be vigilant about how team members are feeling and behaving. Managers themselves still have the greatest power and responsibility to be approachable and create a team culture that will reduce stress.

**Treating Stress in the Workplace:** Organizational stress management interventions should include:

1. Organizational techniques and 2. Individual techniques

**Organizational Techniques**
Organizational stress management interventions can be targeted either at the individual by him / herself (for instance, developing more effective coping behaviors) or at the work conditions (for example, reducing workload).

Three levels of organizational stress management intervention

- Primary reduction of stressors in the workplace
- Secondary assisting individuals to cope with workplace stressors
- Tertiary; providing support to individuals who are experiencing the effects of job related strain and burnout.
This should include controlling the organizational climate. Interventions aimed at changing organizational structures, job design, leadership practices should be designed. Since one of the stressors of modern organizational life is planned change, the organization should provide sufficient support to enable employees to adapt to change. Stress can be prevented/reduced by allowing employees to participate in decisions about changes in work practices and in the organizational structure. Participation helps employees accept change and allows them to express their opinions and air their complaints. It includes altering the organizational climate and providing treatment under Employee Assistance Programs (EAP’S).

Some other ways in which organizations can reduce stress at the workplace are:

**Providing control** – The belief that we can exercise some control over our work greatly reduces the effects of stress. Organizations can improve employees’ sense of control by enriching, enlarging and expanding jobs to provide greater responsibility and decision making authority.

**Defining employees’ roles** - To reduce the stress caused by role ambiguity, managers should tell subordinates clearly what is expected of them and what their job responsibilities are.

**Eliminating work overload and work under load** – Appropriate employee selection and training programmes, equitable promotion schemes, fair distribution of work, and proper job requirements with employee abilities can help eliminate the stress of work overload and work under load.

**Social Support** - Social support networks can reduce personal vulnerability to stress effects. Organizations can enhance social support by promoting cohesive work groups and by training supervisors to show empathy and concern for subordinates. An increase in social support can alleviate many of the harmful effects of stress, especially in situations of work overload and role conflict. Besides, social support enhances personal overall ability to cope with stress. The first line supervisors, being the personification of the organization’s social support network, are an important buffer against job stress.
Individual Techniques

Individual techniques for dealing with stress include relaxation training, biofeedback, and behavior modification. A program of physical exercise can be included. Exercise can increase stamina and endurance, reduce risk factors for coronary heart disease and dissipate excess energy and tension. Many companies sponsor physical fitness programs and provides exercise facilitates and running tracks at the workplace. Other individual techniques for reducing stress should be relaxation training and behavior modification.

Most interventions focus on changing the worker, not the work environment. Usually called “stress management training” these are prescriptive, individual–oriented, relaxation-based techniques, such as progressive muscle relaxation and cognitive behavioral skills training. Most of these interventions techniques were derived by clinical and counseling psychology, where they are routinely used in the treatment of anxiety and psychosomatic disorders. Training sessions usually last an hour or more and are offered on weekly basis.

The design of stress interventions has been guided less by job stress theory than stress theory in general. Thus interventions typically deal with stress from a generic perspective (nature and sources of stress, effects of stress on health, benefits of relaxation, and so on).

An Ideal Stress Intervention

An ideal stress intervention should be comprehensive and attend to individual and organizational factors. Teaching workers stress management skills is necessary and serves a useful purpose, but it deals with only part of the problem. The workplace can be a source of important stressors that can be identified and targeted for change.

One should include an assessment of stressors in the work environment in order to understand the stress–health dynamics. A job stress assessment need not be a major undertaking; an initial assessment could take the form of informal discussions with workers. Opening a channel of communication with employees serves to legitimate stress
as a topic for discussion and is a good way to obtain valuable information about job stressors and employee reactions. Group discussions and questionnaire surveys can be used later to pinpoint common areas of stress and to measure the prevalence of the problem.

One should include employees in the design and evaluation of the intervention. (e.g. joint –labor management committees), workers’ participation and involvement in decision making process, without ignoring either the content or outcomes of training. Design and evaluate a well designed conceptual model- this is useful in defining stressors, the short and long term consequence of stress, key intervening variables, and the nature or relationship among stressors, outcomes, and intervening variables. There is a need for nationally representative data on job risk factors for worker ill health. Today’s workplace is being shaped by a global economy and heightened competitive resulting in substantial changes in the nature of work, employment practices and the composition of work force.

**Early Intervention is the key to effective Stress Management:**

Once a manager becomes aware that a worker is exhibiting signs of stress, they should take urgent action to address the issue. How a stress situation is managed will influence the length of a worker’s absence and any consequent costs. Most of the costs associated with a worker’s compensation claim for occupational stress are related to time off work and rehabilitation services.

If no effort is made to intervene early and resolve issues, especially if the worker takes time off, the case may be difficult to resolve. Organizational coping or management strategies can be undertaken by organizations to reduce stress at source for employees. Altering job design or workplace design so that it is more user friendly, or improving person- job fit by matching employees skills to the tasks they perform, are a few simple ways in which the organization can cost- effectively reduce stress. Improving communications within the organization and increasing employee’s decision and sense of control, together with the elimination of punitive management techniques, will increase job satisfaction and thereby reduce stress and increase the quality of work life.
5.4 Models for Stress Reduction in Organizations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher has developed two models for Stress Reduction in organizations.

**Model 1- Stress Management by Researcher:**

**Employee Centered Model for Holistic Health**

- **Personal Interview**
  - Discussion and Analysis

- **Non Stressed Employees**
  - Already fit and used to fitness activities

- **Stressed Employees**
  - Needs counseling and help

**Model to Overcome Stress**

- **Yoga and Meditation**
  - Yoga – Asanas
  - Pranayama – Breathing exercises
  - Meditation – Basic and Advanced

- **Counseling-Stage 1**
  - Stage 2
  - Removing difficulties

- **Recreation**
  - Sports – Non Strenuous
  - Indoor Games

- **Final Counseling**
  - Swimming, golf, polo
  - Gardening etc

**Holistic Health Develops**
The above model is described as the first stage to get information from the HR departments about their employees either by conducting personal interviews or getting information from the appraisal process (normal practice is to get it through TNA data which is used for training). This will provide data as to which are the employees having stress and those who are not stressed.

The stressed employees are then selected and sent for counseling where he/she is given strategies how to overcome stress in the best possible way (it can be by counseling from specialists, mentoring, yoga, meditation, recreational facilities etc.). The recovery depends upon the absorption level of employees i.e. self interest is also an important criteria to reduce stress.

Model 2- Stages and Diagnosis of Stress and Stress Management

Stage 1: Early Diagnosis
(Appraisal process by HR, Professional Consultation, Self Diagnosis, Management Intervention on Diagnosis)

Stage 2: Analysis (Individual and Organizational Level)
(Designation wise, Job wise, Level wise analysis, Multi task wise analysis)
(Analysis Acc to Bottom line, Lower level, Middle level, and Top level, Analyzing Matrix type of relationships)

Stage 3: Create and Design an Intervention Strategy by Organizations
(Organizations design interventions strategies aligning with HR strategies for Holistic Development)

Stage 4: Executing Interventions-
(Organizational level and Individual level interventions with time limits) (i.e Yoga, Pranayam, Meditation, Fitness and Recreation)

Stage 5: Evaluation-
(The effects of interventions, professional assessment, Stress reduction levels followed by Follow up)
5.5 **Recommendations (Suggestions for Future Research)**

- Future research could take up a study on work stress for employees in uniforms.
- Researchers can take up an in-depth study on occupational stress for health professionals.
- Inclusions of more locations in India for better understanding of industrial work life could provide different understanding of stress and its management.
- To conduct a study on women managers who work 24*7 in Indian or Foreign MNC’s, research may be on their occupational stress and work life balance and maintaining good health.
- Research must be conducted on stress among chronic alcoholics and addicts.
- Studies can be carried out on “Taxing organization and Toxic Work environment at the cost of employee health”, (to what extent organizations can utilize manpower for minting money and money’s worth.)
- Studies can be carried out on Divorcees in Organizations and work life balance – Professional challenges of Globalization.
- Studies on stress as a silent killer for the developing economy.