
BLOCK 2

STRESS AND POOR TIME MANAGEMENT



UNIT 3 MODELS OF STRESS*

Structure

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss various models of stress.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To suggest an intervention or treatment for any problem, first of all it is necessary to comprehend the problem. For instance, if a person has fever then the reason for fever will determine the treatment that s/he will receive. In the case of stress, we need to understand what kind of stress the individual is undergoing, what are its sources and so on. In Unit 1, we have discussed about stress and its concept and nature. Further, we also focused on the sources and measurement of stress. In the present Unit, we will highlight various models of stress that will help us to understand the concept of stress in much better manner.

3.2 MODELS OF STRESS

Various models of stress are discussed as follows:

3.2.1 Fight or Flight Response

Cannon initially termed stress as the emergency response and further elaborated that stress had its source in fighting emotions (Nelson & Quick, 2012). Cannon put forth the fight or flight response with regard to stress. According to Cannon stress is an outcome of an environmental demand that was external and that led to an imbalance in the natural steady state of an individual. He further stated that body encompasses natural defence mechanisms that play a role in maintaining the homeostasis or the natural steady state of an individual. Cannon was also interested in sympathetic nervous system activation in an individual when she is in stressful situation.

* Contributed by Prof. Suhas Shetgovekar, Faculty of Psychology, SoSS, IGNOU; and adapted from BPCS-186, Managing Stress, Block1, Unit 2.

Thus, when an individual faces a situation that is threatening, s/he will either get ready to fight the threat or may flight or run away from the situation. The individual will experience certain physiological changes that get her/him ready to fight or flight. These physiological changes include sweating, dry mouth, tensed muscles and so on. There is also increase in blood pressure and pulse rate. Besides the breathing may also become rapid and pupils may widen. Basically, in this moment, the individual's body will transfer the energy from body systems that are not required to respond to the situation to the body systems that are required to function in order to respond to the situation at hand. The stimulation of sympathetic nervous system and endocrine system takes place. For instance, if a person suddenly comes across a snake, her/his response would be either of fight or flight and in this case her/his body will prepare the person for this situation. Thus, there is a disequilibrium that disturbs the homeostasis of the body. Though, once the situation is over and there are no more challenges or threats, the body will go back to normal and homeostasis will be restored. The physiological changes taking place in fight or flight response can be understood with the help of figure 3.1

The flight and fight response is advantageous as it helps to deal instantly with the situation. In a long run, experiences of stress in this manner can have negative impact on the body and effective functioning of a person (Ghosh, 2015).

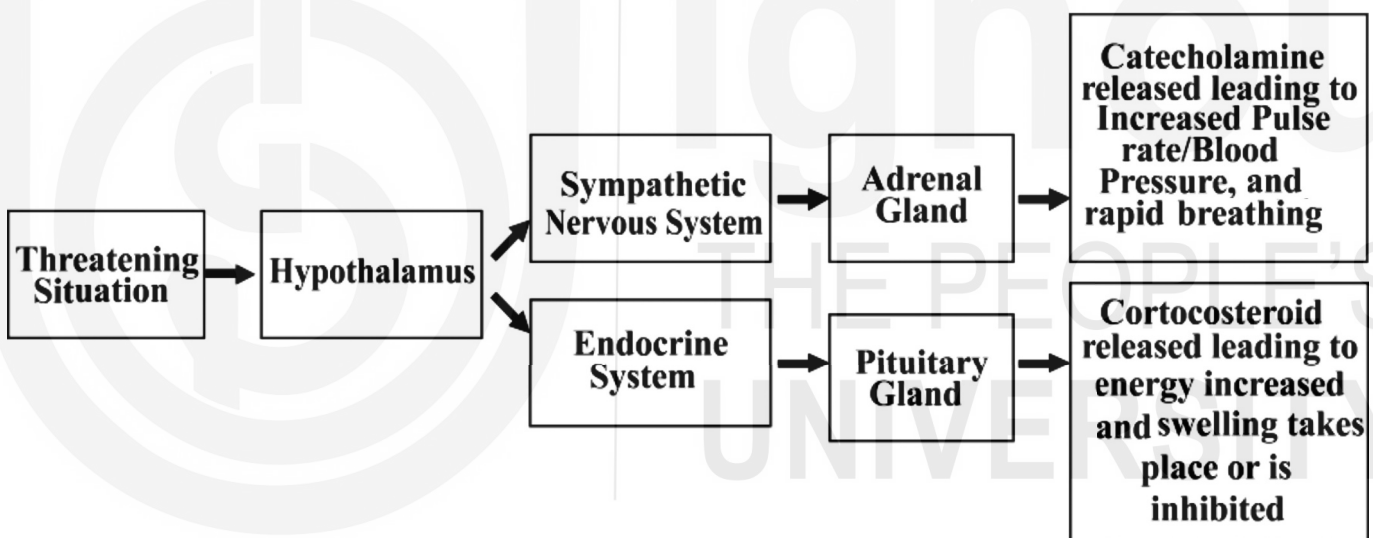


Figure 3.1: Physiological Changes during Fight or Flight Response

The fight or flight model has also been at the receiving end of criticism as individual differences may exist in the way people respond to threat situations. For instance, gender difference may exist in the blood pressure changes experienced during stress. Further, women may in fact not display a fight or flight response but may display 'tend and befriend' response that was described by Taylor as a response to stress, that involves seeking social support during such situations (Sanderson, 2013).

3.2.2 General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)

Hans Selye put forth three stages that are experienced by an individual when s/he is in a situation that is stressful.

Stage one: The first stage is that of 'alarm reaction' that is denoted by a decreased resistance to stress. This stage is similar to that of fight or flight response. During this stage, the autonomic nervous system and endocrine system are activated by the hypothalamus. Further, the epinephrine and norepinephrine are released by

the adrenalin glands. This can be termed as a countershock, where the defence mechanisms of an individual are activated. These defence mechanisms are activated as a result of enlargement of adrenocortical that leads to discharge of adrenalin and thus, leading to increase in functions related to respiration and cardiovascular activities. Thus, similar to fight or flight response, the body is prepared to face the threatening situation. There is also increase in energy production, that is as a result of cortisol produced by adrenal glands. Adrenal glands are stimulated by Adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) that is released by the pituitary gland. Similar to fight or flight response, the individual's body will transfer the energy from body systems that are not required to respond to the situation to the body systems that are required to function as a response to the situation at hand. Thus, functions related to digestion, immune system and even reproductive system do not receive any energy during this stage.

Stage two: In the second stage, that is 'resistance', the adaptation is maximum and the equilibrium is restored. During this stage, there is an adaptation on the part of an individual and s/he resists the stimuli that create stress, though resistance to other stimuli decreases. During this stage as well, a lot of energy is required, thus, the nonessential functions related to digestion, immune system and even reproductive system do not receive any energy. Thus, the individual continues experiencing physiological changes such as increased pulse rate and blood pressure, rapid breathing and so on. These activities are mainly directed towards restoration of the equilibrium or balance. Though, if the stress is still experienced and the defence mechanisms are inactive then the individual will experience the third and last stage. The duration of this stage will depend on the nature, degree and intensity of the stressor that the individual is exposed to as well as the condition of the individual when s/he is exposed to the stressor.

Stage three: The last stage is that of 'exhaustion' where there is a collapse of adaptive mechanisms (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997). Exhaustion occurs as a result of collapse in adaptation mechanisms and due to decrease in the physiological resources. When an individual experiences stress for a long period of time, the individual's physiological resources deplete and this can have a negative impact on the physical health of the individual and the individual may become susceptible to various illnesses and health related issues.

Though GAS provides valuable inputs with regard to stress, it does not focus on the psychological or cognitive reactions to stress (Ghosh, 2015). Further, researches carried out later on stress also indicated contrary results with regard to the release of hormones as stated by Selye. The researches indicated that the release of certain hormones may differ based on the nature and intensity of the emotions experienced by the individual. Thus, the difference may exist in the physiological reactions and changes based on the stressor. Further, the duration of exposure to stressor may also play a role. In this context, we can also discuss about acute and chronic stress.

Acute stress is for a limited period of time. Example could be an examination or interview. These may not have significant effect on the individual as these are met with allostatic response from the body, meaning there are physiological changes such as increase in blood pressure, release of hormones and transfer of energy, but as the stressful situation is over, the body will go to its normal state (Sanderson, 2013). With regard to chronic stress though, the stress will exist for a longer duration and thus have detrimental effect on the physiology of the individual experiencing such a stress. Examples of chronic stress are living in a violent relationship, continued stress due to work overload and so on. In such a

case, there is cumulative stress experienced by the individual and thus equilibrium is maintained by the body that leads to certain physiological responses that can negatively affect the immune system, cardiovascular functioning and will have a negative impact on health of the individual (Sanderson, 2013). Refer to figure 3.2 for stages in GAS.

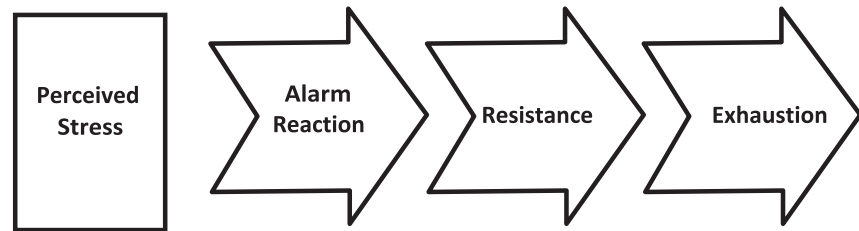


Figure 3.2: Stages in General Adaptation Syndrome

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) Explain the Fight or Flight response.

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2) Describe the General Adaptation Syndrome with the help of a diagramme.

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3.2.3 Cognitive Appraisal Model

This model relates to the perspective put forth by Lazarus and his colleagues. Lazarus believed that stress occurs as a result of an interaction between the individual and the environment. He also focused on the cognitive appraisal that is carried out by an individual while determining whether a situation/ event is stressful or not. He further stated that individual differences exist in the way in which the cognitive appraisal is carried out. The term cognition denotes various mental processes like thinking, reasoning and deciding besides attention, perception, memory, problem solving and creativity (Ghosh, 2015). The cognitive appraisal model states that as the individual faces a stressful situation, they carry out appraisal of the situation in terms of primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal is done on the basis of the negative effect of the stress on the physical and psychological aspects of the individual. And secondary appraisal is done on the basis of whether the individual possesses adequate resources to deal with the stressful situation and avoid its detrimental effects. Thus, as proposed by this model, the reaction of an individual, whether physiological, psychological, affective or behavioural will depend on both primary and secondary appraisals. Figure 3.3 explains the cognitive appraisal model.

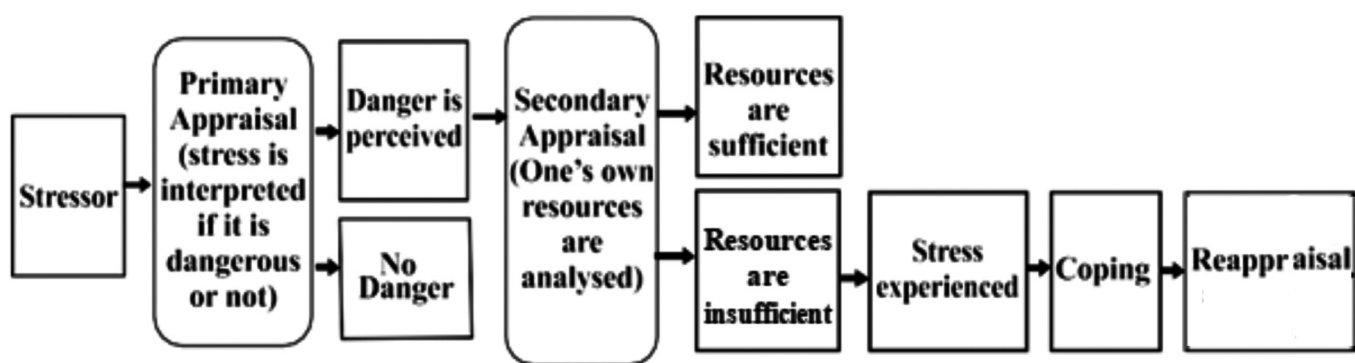


Figure 3.3: The Cognitive Appraisal Model

It can be seen in figure 3.3, as an individual faces a stressor, a primary appraisal is carried out in which whether the stress is a threat or danger or not is determined. If the stressor is found to be dangerous then secondary appraisal is carried out in which the resources of the individual are analysed on the basis of whether they are sufficient or insufficient to deal with the stress. If the resources are insufficient, stress is experienced which is then followed by coping and then there is reappraisal of the stressor.

3.2.4 Person-Environment Fit Model

This (P-E Fit) model was proposed by French, Harrison and Caplan in 1982 (Ghosh, 2015). The main assumption of this model is that individual differences exist with regard to needs and abilities, and stress is created when there is a misfit between the demands that an individual is exposed to and the resources that s/he possesses. An employee who is well prepared for one of the important presentations in her/his organisation will look at this as an opportunity and not threat and thus, will not experience any significant stress. But if the demands of the environment are high and the employee feels that s/he does not possess adequate resources or ability to carry out the presentation, then s/he will experience stress.

3.2.5 Psychodynamic Theory

The psychodynamic theory also explains stress. Freud described signal anxiety and traumatic anxiety. Signal anxiety can be said to occur when an external and objective danger, that is consistent with relationship between stressor and strain is present; and traumatic anxiety is anxiety that occurs within an individual and is related to the repressed sexual drives and instincts that are aggressive within the individual (Ghosh, 2015). Traumatic anxiety can lead to development of psychopathology. And though the anxiety may undergo a process where the ideas that are conflicting are converted to ideas that pose no harm, the energy emerging from the conflict may lead to strain in terms of physical symptoms experienced by the individual.

Further, we can also discuss about the explanation of stress given by Levinson that is based on the psychoanalytic theory by Freud. According to Levinson, two main elements of personality, namely, ego ideal and self- image interact with each other and lead to stress. Ego ideal can be described as expression of an individual's perfect self, whereas self-image is the way an individual perceives herself/himself (negatively or positively). Stress, thus, is an outcome of the gap between the ego ideal and self-image. Thus, this approach mainly focuses on how stress can result due to the unconscious personality factors in an individual.

3.2.6 Genetic Constitutional Theory

The main focus of this theory is on how stress is resisted and coped with the help of genotype and phenotype. To understand the terms genotype and phenotype, genotype denotes the genetic constitution of individual and phenotype is the physiological characteristics of the individual (Ghosh, 2015).

3.2.7 Diathesis-Stress Model

The genetic constitutional theory mainly focuses on how genetic predisposition can make an individual prone to stress. The diathesis- stress model, on the other hand, focuses on the role of both genetics and environment in determining whether the individual will experience stress or not. This theory also proposes that heredity and environment go hand in hand and complement each other in determining stress. For instance, an individual may experience breathing problem when s/he is exposed to prolonged high levels of stress. But in absence of any stress s/he may not experience any breathing problem, despite of the breathing problem being genetic in nature.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) Discuss the Cognitive Appraisal model.

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2) Highlight main assumption of the Person-Environment Fit model of stress.

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3.3 CONCLUSION

To summarise, in the present unit we discussed about various models of stress. The very first model discussed was that of fight or flight response. Cannon initially termed stress as the emergency response and further elaborated that stress had its source in fighting emotions. According to Cannon stress was an outcome of an environmental demand that was external and that led to an imbalance in the natural steady state of an individual. Thus, when an individual faces a situation that is threatening, s/he will either get ready to fight the threat or may flight or run away from the situation. The individual will thus experience certain physiological change that gets him/ her ready to fight or flight. The model was explained with the help of a figure. The next model discussed was the General Adaptation Syndrome put forth by Selye. According to Selye, there are three stages that are experienced by an individual when s/he is in a situation, that is stressful, namely, alarm reaction, resistance and exhaustion. These stages were

discussed in detail with the help of a figure. The next model discussed was cognitive appraisal model. This model relates to the perspective put forth by Lazarus and his colleagues. Lazarus believed that stress occurs as a result of an interaction between the individual and the environment. He also focused on the cognitive appraisal, that is carried out by an individual while determining whether a situation/ event is stressful or not. The cognitive appraisal model states that as the individual faces a stressful situation, they carry out appraisal of the situation in terms of primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal is done on the basis of the negative effect of the stress on the physical and psychological aspects of the individual. And secondary appraisal is done on the basis of whether the individual possesses adequate resources to deal with the stressful situation and avoid its detrimental effects. The next model discussed was the person-environment fit model that was proposed by French, Harrison and Caplan in 1982 (Ghosh, 2015). The main assumption of this model is that individual differences exist with regard to needs and abilities and stress is created when there is a misfit between the demands that an individual is exposed to and the resources that s/he possesses. The psychodynamic theory was also discussed. This theory focuses on signal anxiety and traumatic anxiety and how traumatic anxiety can lead to development of psychopathology. And though the anxiety may undergo a process where the ideas that are conflicting are converted to ideas that pose no harm, the energy emerging from the conflict may lead to strain in terms of physical symptoms experienced by the individual. The next model discussed was the genetic constitutional theory. The main focus of this theory is on how stress is resisted and coped with the help of genotype and phenotype. Thus, the theory states that how an individual resists stress will depend on her/his genetic predisposition. The last model, that is the diathesis- stress model focuses on the role of both genetics and environment on whether the individual will experience stress or not. This theory also proposes that heredity and environment go hand in hand and complement each other in determining stress.

3.4 GLOSSARY

Cognitive Appraisal Model: This model relates to the perspective put forth by Lazarus and his colleagues. Lazarus believed that stress occurs as a result of an interaction between the individual and the environment. He also focused on the cognitive appraisal (primary and secondary appraisal), that is carried out by an individual while determining whether a situation/ event is stressful or not.

Diathesis-Stress Model: The diathesis-stress model, focuses on the role of both genetics and environment on whether the individual will experience stress or not.

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS): This was introduced by Selye and includes three stages that are experienced by an individual when s/he is in a situation, that is stressful, namely, alarm reaction, resistance and exhaustion.

Genetic Constitutional Theory: The main focus of this theory is on how stress is resisted and coped with the help of genotype and phenotype. The genetic constitutional theory mainly focuses on how genetic predisposition can make an individual prone to stress.

Psychodynamic Theory: The psychodynamic theory also explains stress, in which Freud described signal anxiety and traumatic anxiety. Signal anxiety can be said to occur when an external and objective danger, that is consistent with relationship between stressor and strain is present and traumatic anxiety is anxiety that occurs within an individual and is related to the repressed sexual drives and instincts that are aggressive within the individual.

3.5 REFERENCES

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3.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - For your answer, refer to Section 3.2 (3.2.1)
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - For your answer, refer to Section 3.2 (3.2.2)

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - For your answer, refer to Section 3.2 (3.2.3)
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - For your answer, refer to Section 3.2 (3.2.4)

UNIT 4 WORKPLACE STRESS: MAJOR CAUSES*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Models of Stress
 - 4.2.1 Conservation of Resources Model
 - 4.2.2 Job Demands-Resource Model
 - 4.2.3 Challenge and Hindrance Stressors
- 4.3 Sources of Workplace Stress
- 4.4 Consequences of Stress
- 4.5 Distractions at Workplace
- 4.6 Preventive Stress Management
 - 4.6.1 Individual Prevention
 - 4.6.2 Organisational Stress Management
- 4.7 Conclusion
- 4.8 Glossary
- 4.9 References
- 4.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Define stress, distress and strain;
- Describe the stress process;
- Identify the distractors at workplace;
- Elucidate the consequences of stress; and
- Explain preventive stress management at individual and organisational level.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Stress, strain and distress are many times used interchangeably and are very commonly used in everyday language. However, they might be conceptually similar but are different. It is imperative to think about stress which unfolds around the person all the time, and its preventive measures. Stress is one of the most discussed problems these days and it is very common to hear 'I am so stressed out' in everyday parlance. Stress has different meanings. Mostly, stress has been construed negatively and something to be avoided. However, stress is important for one's peak performance. Plain speaking, stress is defined by psychologists as the body's reaction to change that requires a physical, mental, or emotional adjustment or response. This change is referred to as a stressor. Stressor is thus, anything that causes stress. It has been found in a survey that 89 percent of Indians suffer from stress as compared to 86 percent of global average (July 10, 2018; The Economic Times). The American Psychological Association (2009) found

* Contributed by Dr. Monika Misra, Faculty of Psychology, School of Social Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi

that the 65 percent of employees report that work is a major source of stress.

It is to be noted here that there are individual differences in responding to stress. For instance, some people may become stressed at some slight change while others remain calm even in difficult circumstances. There are subjective variations in response to stress. We will deal about this in later part of this Unit. On the other hand, distress is a state in which a person is not able to adapt to the stressor(s) and is not able to successfully cope with the environmental demand thus, compromising one's well-being. Strain is a response to stress.

Box 4.1: Is all stress bad?

All stress is not bad. There is something like 'Good' stress. Good stress is caused by a positive response to a desired stressor. Thus, even a happy event can be stressful. Good stress is known as Eustress (the term was coined by the pioneers of Stress Research from the Greek word E, which means 'good'). Examples of eustress are getting a job, or a job promotion.

Think about an event that caused eustress in you.

Thus, stress is not a simple anxiety, or a nervous tension and is not necessarily bad or to be avoided. In this Unit, our focus is to develop an understanding about stress and its different approaches for better understanding about the workplace stress. We will also explore causes, and consequences of stress. This will be followed by preventive management techniques at individual and organisational level. Finally, the distractors that cause stress at workplace will also be examined.

4.2 MODELS OF STRESS

It is imperative to understand stress, and for this it is important to develop an understanding of the stress process with the help of various models. You must have learnt about some of the models of stress in Unit 3 like, fight or flight response, General Adaptation Syndrome, Cognitive Appraisal Model, Person-Environment Fit Model, Psychodynamic Theory, Genetic Constitutional Theory, and Diathesis-Stress Model. In this section, we will cover few other models that have gained popularity as well as some of the recent approaches to understand stress. All of the mentioned models help us to understand the process of stress. This also helps to identify sources of workplace stress, and thereby adopt ways to cope and lessen them.

4.2.1 Conservation of Resources Model

As you have learnt that Selye's GAS model helps us to understand the biological responses to stress, however, it becomes important to stressors especially at workplace since more and more people are now feeling the pressure of workplace stress. The Conservation of Resources (COR) model was proposed by Steven Hobfoll (1989), and it posits that there are a set of resources that an individual seeks to acquire and maintain in order to accommodate, withstand or overcome potential threats. These resources can be home and clothing (objects), living arrangement (condition), self-esteem, knowledge, time (personal characteristics) and such related factors. Hobfoll identified a set of 74 specific resources, which according to him "appears to have validity in western context". Thus, stress occurs when there is loss of resources, which serve to deplete once resources. Further, according to this model, stress is largely culturally determined and the demands placed on the individual are from shared social context. Stress has environmental, cultural, and social bases in terms of demands and to acquire and protect the circumstances so as to ensure one's well-being.

4.2.2 Job Demands-Resource Model

The Job Demands-Resource (JDR) model is based on Karasek's earlier work on Job Demands-Control model (1979), which emphasised on job control as a major factor for understanding employee's stress. The JDR model expanded the earlier work and placed job control within the larger realm of resources that may act to serve as a buffer or help in reducing the effects of the demands of one's job. The model posits that the strain results from the mismatch between the job demands and the resources available to the employee. All jobs have their own resources that are used. However, stress is caused when the demands of a job exceed the resources available to the employee.

4.2.3 Challenge and Hindrance Stressors

Hindrance stressors are considered to be 'bad ones' and are explained as job demands that are negatively linked to work engagement (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010). Examples for this are organisational politics, lack of resources, and other related factors. Here, challenge stressors are the 'good kind' of stressors, which are supposed to be developmental and are positively related to work engagement. This includes role demand, workload, and such other related factors. However, both stressors are related to strain and burnout, and hindrance stressors have more influence on such negative results (Podsakoff, 2007).

4.3 SOURCES OF WORKPLACE STRESS

So far you have learnt about stress, strain and distress, as well as the different approaches to understand stress. Thus, stressors are events, contexts, or demands which cause a stress reaction, thus leading to increased strain in the person. The effect of stressors is cumulative, which means that more stressors a person has over a greater length of time, it is more likely that negative outcomes of stress will be manifested. At times people are able to handle even 10 small stressors, but sometimes even one stressor becomes difficult to be handled. Thus, stressors are cumulative and a person's resistance to stressor breaks overtime.



Figure 4.1 : Causes of Workplace Stress

- i) **Role Demands:** An employee is expected to perform variety of roles, which s/he has to fulfill. In this regard, causes of the workplace stress are depicted in figure 4.1. The organisation hires a person to do certain things. However, the expectations placed on the individual are very stressful. Role ambiguity and role conflict are such demands. In the former, there is lack of clarity regarding

one's work roles. Role ambiguity can take place when the organisation does not provide enough information about what is expected from an employee. On the other hand, in role conflict there are multiple contradictory demands at the workplace. Thus, it is unclear how one completes the task or fulfills the role because completing the task as per one persons' specification may disappoint someone else. Studies have concluded that role demand stressors impact the employees' lives both at the workplace and at home.

- ii) **Information Overload:** Never before this time, people have received so much of information. In fact, the pandemic is considered as an infodemic period! The information includes both at the personal as well as for the professional domain. Thus, information overload refers to the exposure to too much of information or data. Getting away from information is also not that easy. In a study by Gibbs (2012), 59 percent of those aged 18-29 said that they could just remain away for one hour from their mobile devices. Researches have concluded that too much information interferes with effective performance at work. Multitasking and fragmented attention leads to decrease in efficiency and mental alertness.
- iii) **Work-life Tradeoffs:** One of the most common work-life tradeoffs is work-family conflict or work-life conflict. There being 168 hours in a week, and how these hours are being spent in maintaining a balance between the work and family areas is a challenge for many of us. Work-family conflict arises when demands from workplace and non-work domain negatively affect one another. It leads to decreased work, life satisfaction and negative emotions.
- iv) **Interpersonal Challenges:** Many times, people quit their jobs because they want to quit their managers. If the relationship with the manager or the supervisor is not amiable, then it can be a cause of stress at the workplace. The role of a manager is to assign work, set up schedule or create a working climate. A supportive manager creates the work environment to be joyful. However, a moody manager or supervisor makes the job unbearable. The interpersonal stressors can be also of mild level like just as simply not liking the person. But the interpersonal stressors that can be of serious nature are workplace bullying and abusive supervisor. Coworkers and customers/clients can also be a source of stress. Studies have shown conclusive results that if the organisational climate supports bullying and aggression, then it leads to strain and negative job attitudes.
- v) **Evaluation Apprehension:** When people are concerned about being evaluated or judged by others, it can also be a source of workplace stress. Being evaluated can be helpful in creating arousal and being motivated (Kerr & Tindale, 2004), however, high levels of evaluation apprehension have been shown to reduce employees' willingness to share knowledge in the workplace (Bordia, Irmer, & Abusah, 2006).

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) What are the main sources of workplace stress?

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- 2) Explain the terms stress, distress and strain.

- 3) Elucidate the Conservation of Resources Model of Stress.

4.4 CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS

By now you must have gathered that too much stress is neither good for an organisation nor for the well-being of individuals. Can you think about the probable outcomes or the consequences of stress? In this section, we will review the major consequences of stress at workplace under three categories.

i) **Physiological Consequences of Workplace Stress**

You are aware of the physiological changes in the body because of stress. It is easy to measure such changes in the body based on short-term and long-term stress, such as heart rate, metabolic changes, breathing patterns, skin problems, etc. Stress leads to increased cortisol levels due to which there is higher incidence of illness and disease. This includes cardiovascular diseases, cognitive impairment, Type II Diabetes, etc. Studies have also associated workplace stress to asthma, stomach ulcer, alcohol and tobacco misuse, and insomnia.

ii) **Psychological Consequences of Workplace Stress**

It is not only the physiological consequences but also the psychological consequences that are equally problematic because of long-term stress. Depression and anxiety are common psychological disorders that are on the rise in the millennial generation. Depression is a condition when a person feels sad and hopeless. Anxiety is a general state of apprehension or nervousness about any unknown thing. Both the problems occur because of the changes in the brain chemistry due to prolonged stress. Rumination is also another psychological problem, which is caused by stress. It is the inability to stop thinking of the past events, and think about them continually. Continuously thinking about the past may affect the mood of the next day. The Rumination further increases the stress levels. Even, frustration and burnout are also common psychological consequences of workplace stress. Burnout refers to long-term exhaustion and decreased interest in the work area, which can result when someone who is engaged in work is not able to cope with the job demands because of low level of energy or feelings of job dissatisfaction.

iii) **Behavioural Consequences of Workplace Stress**

The main behavioural consequences of stress are decreased performance; and

increased withdrawal, anger and violence, alcohol and drug abuse. As earlier mentioned that all stress is not bad, therefore stress should be in just right proportion for optimal functioning. Too much or too less stress will impair one's performance. As indicated in figure 4.2, optimum stress is required for a person for optimal functioning.

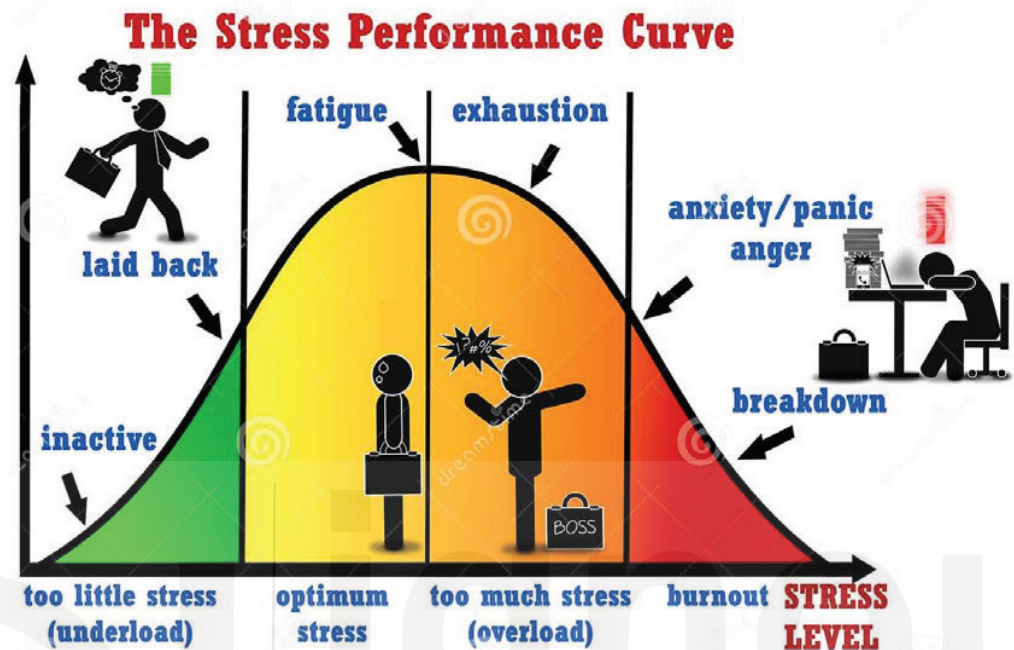


Figure 4.2: The Stress-Performance Relationship

Source: <https://www.dreamstime.com/stress-performance-curve>

An important behavioural outcome is withdrawal from the organisation. This is in the form of lack of engagement at work, unpunctuality, absenteeism and even leaving the organisation. People who do not withdraw due to stress are also problematic. For instance, such people can lead others towards anger, moodiness and violence. Abuse of drugs and alcohol are other potent behavioural outcome of stress. In research conducted in China by Liu, Wang, and Shi (2009), it was found that after a stressful day, individuals were more likely to increase the amount of alcohol they consumed that night, an additional stressor increased their desire to drink more, leading to greater consumption of alcohol.

- iv) **Individual differences:** You must have realised that the no two individuals will have the same response to a stressor. This is because people differ in terms of their knowledge, skills, abilities and personalities. One of the most frequently researched areas is the association between stress and personality. And Type A and Type B personality have received more attention. The personality traits of Type A displays high levels of impatience, do things quickly, and are highly competitive. Such people are prone to experiencing stress. On the other hand, Type B individual do not have the urgency of time, being less devoted to work and being less competitive than Type A individual. In earlier researches, it was found that Type A individual is at a higher risk of negative health outcome (Friedman & Rosenman, 1959). However, the recent studies have concluded that Type A are less susceptible to health problems because they are more likely to seek medical intervention through online medical assistance as compared to Type B individual. Recent studies have also concluded about another personality as Type D, which is associated with coronary heart disease. In this context, Type D individual

represents people who have negative outlook and social inhibitions. Denollet, Vaes, & Brutsaert, 2000 have concluded that there is a significant relationship between Type D and negative cardiovascular outcomes. Workaholism is also an important consequence of stress. It is a condition, where an individual works excessively and compulsively. When they stop, they feel the guilt that they have not worked enough. Workaholism is related to negative mental and physical health outcomes (Taris, Schaufeli, Verhoeven, 2005), higher work-family conflict (Bakker, Demouretti, Burke, 2009), but it is also related to higher work satisfaction (Ng, Sorenson, & Feldman, 2005).

4.5 DISTRACTIONS AT WORKPLACE

The workplace is a wide arena that encompasses not just work-related activities, but plenty of socialisation as well. Humans by nature are social animals and the workplace becomes a second home to many, due to the amount of time spent there. To conceptualise an organisation devoid of social interaction would be a utopian fantasy, from the employers' point of view. For the employee however, working with somebody, or sharing a desk with an individual they know nothing about can be quite perturbing. Small talk is not just a way to maintain interactions at the workplace, but is often seen as a break in the monotonous work routine. While some distractions at the workplace can be quite conducive for the optimal functioning of the organisation, others can prove to be detrimental in terms of productivity and efficiency.

Distraction can be defined as any provocative stimulus, which directs the attention away from an activity at hand (Speier, 1996). It is a manipulation that puts a load on the attentional capacity of the organism, wherein some information is processed efficiently via cognitive shortcuts, whereas some is left unattended (Baron et al., 1973; Glass and Singer, 1972). Distractions can be unpredictable and uncontrollable stressors in the environment that lead of information overload (Cohen, 1980). Noise, stress, informal conversations with colleagues, anxiety, organisational policies or even the temperature can pose as possible distractions amongst others at the workplace. Many of these are generated externally, due to the environment one is placed in (Mark et al., 2005).

Large number of studies has been conducted on distractions of workplace. Some of the researchers address it as interruptions. The commonality between the two is the attentional capacity overload, which causes cognitive disruption. Distractions at workplace are caused by many factors like noise, anxiety, stress, temperature, poor appraisal, and poor organisational policies. Generally, distraction is caused by arousal or overload. Literature categorises distractions to be generated either internally (checking an email as it is received) or externally (workplace architecture, technology infrastructure, organisational policies, and indoor environment). Distractions can also be voluntary (the person leaving the chair for a short break) and involuntary (a coworker stopping by to check the plan for evening).

Distractions and Efficiency

Baron (1986) put forth the distraction-conflict theory, which explains how distractions and attentional conflicts at the workplace can both, enhance as well as deteriorate performance. Proposed as an extension of the social facilitation theory, the distraction-conflict theory postulates that the attentional conflicts caused by distractions can act as partial mediators that can result in social facilitation or social impairment. The added cognitive load exerted by distractions results in

attentional overload which in turn, redispenses the person to engage in cognitive short-cuts, ultimately leading to excel in simple and well-learned tasks. However, such a cognitive overload limits the individual's capacity to process heavy information that requires substantial attention or which is novel, wherein prior experiences and heuristics do not help. Since complex tasks require an individual to process many stimuli simultaneously, an attention deficit caused by distractions can hamper this ability, leading to incomplete processing of the task (Coehn, 1978). Auditory distractions at the workplace can be a matter of concern due to their ability to impair performance (Baron et al., 1978).

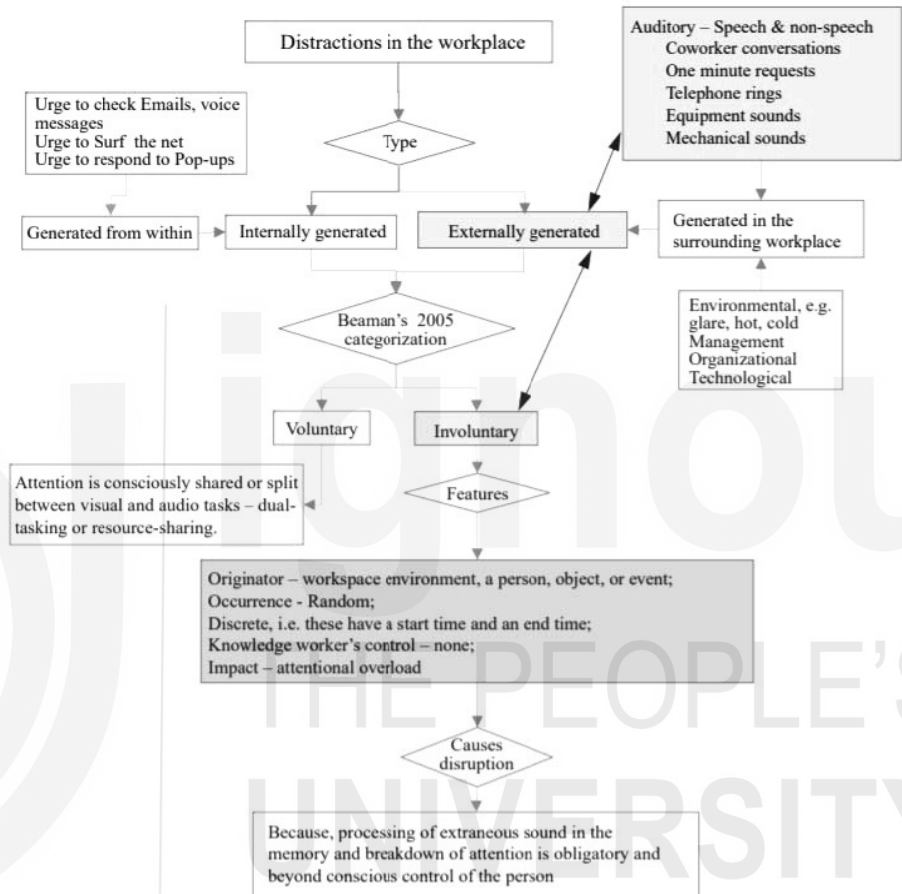


Figure 4.3: Comprehensive Distractions Model

Source: Roper & Juneja, 2008.

4.6 PREVENTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress is a ubiquitous phenomenon and cannot be avoided from either personal or work life. Thus, the principle of preventive stress management is an organisational philosophy that emphasises on the joint responsibility of both the people and the organisation in preventing distress and strain, and promoting health. The concept of preventive stress management was first used in preventive medicine. It encompasses three stages: *primary*, *secondary* and *tertiary*. The aim of the primary prevention is to reduce, modify, or eliminate the demand or stressor causing stress. The secondary prevention aims to alter or modify the individual's or the organisation's response to a demand or stressor. Healing the individual or the organisational symptoms of distress is the aim of the tertiary prevention.

4.6.1 Individual Prevention

There are various self-directed strategies to reduce distress and promote well-

being. Individual prevention involves intervention at the primary, secondary, and tertiary level activities. Here, primary prevention activities are positive thinking, time management, and leisure time activities. Positive thinking is a style of thinking, which is optimistic. It enhances the well-being of an individual, her/his performance and contributes in less susceptibility to mental health disorders like depression.

Time pressure is considered as an important source of stress. The symptoms of poor time management are missed deadlines, work overload, insufficient rest time, etc. In this context, effective time management methods are setting the goals that are attainable, prioritising the goals, planning for goal attainment like delegation, etc. In addition, leisure time activities aim for rest and recovery from strenuous either at home or at office; physical exercises are important for secondary stress prevention. It is to be noted that Aerobic exercise makes the heart functioning stronger; and relaxation training helps in holistic development. Diet also plays an important role in stress management, but foods high in cholesterol can adversely affect blood chemistry. Thus, a good diet helps a person to enhance one's overall health, and less vulnerability to distress. Finally, professional help is important to maintain well-being. Early detection of distress and opting for professional help contribute in preventing physical and psychological problems.

4.6.2 Organisational Stress Management

Stress management at the organisational level also engages in primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. Mostly, the prevention at the primary level includes job redesign, role negotiation and career management. Job redesign tends to increase worker control. Team building and social support are considered under secondary prevention. The secondary prevention is also targeted through goal setting activities. In this regard, goal setting helps in reducing role conflict and ambiguity, and helps to increase task motivation. Role negotiation also helps people to modify their work roles. In addition, team building helps in developing social relationships at the workplace, which is important for enhancing psychological well-being.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) Explain the psychological consequences of workplace stress.

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- 2) Elucidate the meaning of distractions at workplace and enlist distractors at workplace.

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3) Describe the preventive stress management.

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4.7 CONCLUSION

Stress is an all-pervasive phenomenon. The term is interchangeably being used with terms like distress, and strain. In this Unit, the stress process was explained with the help of three recent models, namely conservation of resources model, job demand-resource model, and challenge and hindrance stressors. In addition, main sources of stress at workplace have been identified as role demands, information overload, work-life tradeoffs, interpersonal challenges, and evaluation apprehension. The consequences of stress are categorised into psychological, physiological, and behavioural. However, distractions and interruptions have been explained at the workplace. Now, you will be able to identify workplace distractors. Even, relationship between distractors and efficiency is also discussed. Finally preventive stress management has been explained, which provides detail about stress prevention at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Last, but not least, for better understanding, individual prevention methods and organisational stress management are briefly mentioned in this Unit.

4.8 GLOSSARY

Distraction: It can be defined as any provocative stimulus, which directs the attention away from an activity at hand.

Evaluation Apprehension: A source of workplace stress when people are concerned about being evaluated or judged by others.

Infodemic: An infodemic is an overabundance of information, both online and offline.

Preventive stress management: It is an organisational philosophy that emphasises on the joint responsibility of both the people and the organisation in preventing distress and strain, and promoting health.

Role conflict: Multiple contradictory demands at the workplace.

Stress: Defined by psychologists as the body's reaction to change that requires a physical, mental, or emotional adjustment or response.

Stressor: Anything that causes stress

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4.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Role demands, information overload, work-like tradeoffs, interpersonal challenges, and evaluation apprehension.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Stress is body's reaction to change that requires a physical, mental, or emotional adjustment or response.
 - Distress is a condition when an individual is not able to adapt to the stressor.
 - Strain is a response to stress.
- 3) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Conservation of Resources Model explains that there is a set of resources that an individual seeks to acquire and maintain in order to accommodate, withstand or overcome potential threats.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - The psychological consequence of stress is the development of psychological problems like, depression and anxiety.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Distraction can be defined as any provocative stimulus, which directs the attention away from an activity at hand. Few of the distractors at workplace can be workplace architecture, technology, infrastructure, organisational policies, and indoor environment.
- 3) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Preventive stress management is an organisational philosophy that emphasises on the joint responsibility of both the people and the organisation in preventing distress and strain, and promoting health.

UNIT 5 POOR TIME MANAGEMENT: EFFECTS ON JOB PERFORMANCE*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Core Premises
- 5.3 Work Orientation
- 5.4 Attitudinal Dimension
- 5.5 Functional Style
- 5.6 Planning System
- 5.7 Structure and Process
- 5.8 Conclusion
- 5.9 Glossary
- 5.10 References
- 5.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Highlight the characteristics of 'poor' time management;
- Assess the effects of inadequate time management on lifestyle of individuals; and
- Examine the impact of poor time management on job performance at workplace.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Meaning and Implications

In the context of time management, 'poor' could mean 'inefficient', 'ineffective', 'defective', 'deficient', 'inadequate', 'faulty', 'imperfect' 'substandard' or 'unsatisfactory'. But the word 'poor' is still the most expressive of 'weak' time management. The word 'job performance' means the functioning of work system or the quality and quantity of the job done at the workplace. Workplace may refer to an organisation that could be government or private organisation or even a social or cultural institution.

Before we deal with the impact of poor time management on job performance, let us try to define the likely characteristics of an unsatisfactory system of time management. It may be cautioned at the outset that all the following features will not co-exist simultaneously in any organisation. May be only a few or one or two features characterise an organisation. It may also be underlined that in organisation, no limitation or weakness is likely to exist in totality; it may be present only to a partial extent, yet, it will be a useful exercise to identify

* Contributed by Prof. Ramesh K. Arora, Former Professor of Public Administration, Rajasthan University, Jaipur

the obvious weaknesses in time management systems. These weaknesses or limitations are being broadly categorised into the following sections. It may be cautioned that the following classification of categories should not be treated with rigidity. The classified categories are not like water-tight compartments. Their components are closely inter-connected and inter-dependent.

5.2 CORE PREMISES

In this section, the issues of treating time as a low-value phenomenon, ethical issues related to time management, and work-life imbalance are being discussed.

i) Low Value of Time as a Resource

One of the salient differences between the developed and the developing countries is that in the former group of nations, time is valued immensely, while in the latter, its value is relatively less. No doubt, there are organisations, which are intensely mindful of the significance of time as an important source in the process of development, yet the culture of casualness regarding time management exists in most government structures, educational and social institutions and in several private sector organisations. Time is generally 'spent' or 'used' instead of being invested and the productivity of each unit of time is rarely assessed in most organisations.

This casual attitude towards time in developing nations is so pervasive that time wastage, delays, unpunctuality, procrastination and broken promises are the commonly accepted patterns of time management. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India, once exhorted Indian citizens to shed laziness and become hardworking. The impact of indifference towards time-utilisation negatively affects the productivity of organisations and brings down job performance at the micro as well as macro level.

ii) Ethical Implications

When citizens' work is not done on time by civil servants, say in regard to the issuing of birth and death certificates, caste certificates, licences to start or expand business and industry, constructions, licences for imports or exports and payments for goods or services procured by the government. People affected by this deliberate neglect by government officials are compelled to pay 'speed money' to get their legitimate demands met, resulting into a high level of corruption. Giving bribes for getting the work done does not just involve the bribe giver and the bribe receiver, in fact it has a most devastating effect on the overall work culture and morality in the government system.

When 'inaction' or 'obstructed action' leads to corruption there is an undeclared illegitimate price to be paid for getting any governmental work done by the citizens. Thus, poor time management, reflected in delays in government functioning, leads to unethical conduct of public functionaries. Resultantly, most of the government work is not done on time and is unduly delayed. Hence, the faith of the common citizen in the political leadership and the bureaucracy diminishes abundantly.

It is generally complained that File movement in the government system is very slow. This is commonly branded as 'red-tapism'. As a result, most work gets delayed, decisions are not made on time, plans and programmes are not executed expeditiously and this all-pervasive inefficiency leads to wastage of time and money. The whole job performance of the government thus, suffers considerably. The poor people in a poor country become poorer because of poor time management. The benefits of government programmes

and schemes do not reach on time, sometimes not even during the disasters like floods and famines. Such callousness is a stigma on the government systems in several developing countries.

iii) **Work-Life Imbalance**

Job performance depends on the contribution of various personnel working in an organisation and their contribution depends on their competence, attitude and organisational loyalty. When an organisation gives to its employees adequate time for their health, family and happiness needs, their motivation increases. However, there are several organisations that extract excessive work from their employees without giving them adequate time for meeting their own personal needs. This excessive impersonal bureaucratic approach affects the motivation of personnel who occasionally feel that working for longer hours and even on holidays is their 'compulsion' and not a self-induced action.

On the basis of extensive research in organisational psychology, social psychologists around the world have observed that the personnel suffering from poor health, fatigue and mental tiredness are unable to give their best to their organisations. Fatigue results into low performance. This aspect of poor time management is a result of lack of balance between the macro and the micro level.

5.3 WORK ORIENTATION

In this section, issues relating to the preparation of to-do lists, work prioritisation, doing right job at wrong time and doing hard work rather than smart work are being briefly discussed.

i) **Negligence in Preparing To-Do Lists**

As has been mentioned, in units, 'to-do lists' are key to sound time management. World's most successful leaders such as Lal Bahadur Shastri, Barack Obama, Henry Ford, Bill Gates and Sunder Pichai invariably draw their daily to-do lists for the work to be performed. These lists help in systematising the job-schedule during a day. However, there are certain flaws generally observed regarding such to-do lists. Some of these weaknesses are as follows:

- a) There is no regularity in preparing to-do lists and they do not become a part of the time management practices, followed in several organisations. It has been observed that job performance is generally better on the days when to-do lists are prepared and followed, and it falls when a day is spent in an unplanned manner.
- b) To-do lists are prepared in an unwieldy manner, with too many tasks listed in a haphazard manner. When a list of tasks prepared is not in consonance with the time available, many tasks are likely to remain undone, leading to a sense of inadequacy and dissatisfaction within the organisation.
- c) When a to-do list does not mention tasks to be undertaken according to a priority, quite a few important high value tasks remain undone and paradoxically, unimportant (low value) tasks get done. The overall impact of this imbalance on the job performance is negative.
- d) Most to-do lists mention the tasks to be done on a particular day, but no specific time is allotted to each task.
- e) Sometimes, to-do lists are prepared without giving serious thought to linking it with the wider goals of an organisation. Thus 'efficiency' gets

precedence over 'effectiveness' (goal-attainment), which is not a sign of sound time management.

- f) Daily to-do lists are sometimes not integrated properly with the weekly to-do lists.
- g) Certain to-do lists are packed with items, leaving very little cushion time. For instance, when a particular task takes more than the allotted time, the next listed activity is likely to suffer. This would be the result of inadequate attention paid to cushion time.
- h) Occasionally, a to-do list is followed with great rigidity. As a result, undue time is spent on a particular task even when it deserves to be postponed for a more appropriate future date. In the absence of flexibility in the execution of to-do list, certain important tasks that are important as well as urgent get ignored. A rigid to-do list provides no place for 'emergent matters'.

There are lakhs of pending cases in Indian judicial courts. The daily cases lists prepared by them for the admission, hearing or disposal of cases is generally unduly long while the available time allows for only a few of such cases to be dealt with, while rest of them are postponed for future dates. The list of pending cases in the judiciary continues to get bigger thus, adding to the burden of the courts. There should be organised systematic studies by the judiciary itself to radically reduce the pendency through the application of proper management techniques.

ii) **Clear understanding of Prioritisation of Tasks**

Right prioritisation of tasks is necessary to understand wrong prioritisation. In this regard, right prioritisation is a key to good time management. There are four kinds of tasks to be performed by any individual or organisation:

- a) Tasks that are 'urgent' as well as 'important'.
- b) Tasks that are 'urgent' though not 'important'.
- c) Tasks that may not be 'urgent' but are 'important' to be performed.
- d) Tasks those are neither 'urgent' nor 'important'.

This classification has been explained in Unit 7. However, what is observed in certain organisations is that work is performed in a routine manner and most tasks are undertaken according to 'first come, first done' basis. As a result, certain less important tasks get done first and in case, such tasks are big in number, they consume big chunk of time of the officials, leaving little time for more important tasks. This can be prevented by intelligently classifying the tasks into the four categories noted above and then prioritised according to their importance and urgency. The big pay-off tasks should be given precedence over the small pay-off tasks. This basic principle, when not followed, has a negative impact on the job performance of an organisation, whether in government or private sector.

In poor time management frameworks, sometimes, urgent, though less important, tasks are given priority above the tasks that are more important and less urgent. When 'urgency' becomes the criterion for priority and not importance, several crucial or critical tasks are neglected or pushed to the background, thus diminishing the overall performance of an organisation. How to judge whether a particular task is more important or less important? The best way is to calculate notionally the likely loss to the organisation, if a particular task is not performed on time. The advantages or disadvantages in doing a task urgently or belatedly can be rationally considered before assigning a priority to it.

iii) **Right Job at Wrong Time**

Can there be a 'right' time or a 'wrong' time for certain jobs? Yes, truly so! Just as the students study difficult subjects in the mornings and do practical work in the nights, crucial and complex administrative decisions should be made before the lunch-time, while routine matters should be disposed of in the afternoon when the receptivity and energy level are relatively low. Unfortunately, this principle is not followed in most organisations. Piles of files on routine matters that do not require much concentration or creativity are disposed of in the morning time, while crucial matters are dealt within the post-lunch period. Paradoxically, official meetings, which do not require a focussed attention of officers, are organised in the morning, while ideally, they should be held in the post-lunch period.

Each hour has its own rhythm, which should be taken into consideration while using it for the official work. In a poor time management system, this important point is ignored and little discretion is employed on the issue of task-time combination. As a result, sometimes, 'routine' tasks take precedence over the 'protein' tasks during the 'best' time and the reverse happens during the 'ordinary' time. The quality of decision made and jobs done maybe adversely affected on account of 'wrong' timings. Agreed, there is no rigid rule about it. We find officials who are energetic and fresh all the time and who can perform well at any time of the day, but such persons are exceptions. Hence, proper job performance requires rationally allocated time-chunks for different kinds of decisions and tasks.

iv) **Hard Work Rather than Smart Work**

It is generally believed that hard work is the most important requisite to attain success in any profession. Hard work means putting in large number of hours in performing one's duties. Thus, the common maxim is : Harder the work, greater the success. In personal as well as professional life, however, hard work pays only when it is done methodically, systematically, intelligently and perceptively. These attributes of work are characteristic of smart work.

The smart work has following features:

- a) It is undertaken after examining all possible strategies of work performance, and after selecting the best possible strategy.
- b) It involves minimum possible time taken in doing a particular task.
- c) It is specifically goal-oriented. Each activity and resource-investment is directly aimed at goal-achievement.
- d) It is performed by the most competent personnel in a specific specialised area. Technical competence of a person is the key factor in the assignment of special tasks.
- e) There is hardly any wastage of financial, human or temporal (time) resources in the process of job performance.
- f) It employs the best possible tools in performing a particular task.
- g) It is innovative and creative in its approach and orientation.
- h) It is need-based, and in tune with the requirements of the beneficiaries.

Thus, smart work is efficient, effective, economic, quality-oriented, citizen-centric and innovative.

A poor time management style depends on conventional strategies of work. It employs traditional method and processes and relies on people who are trained in

orthodox working style. In such traditional work structures, hard work is the ideal norm for attaining success. However, where only hard work becomes the criterion for achievement, and attributes of smart work are ignored, job performance becomes least which could have been done optimally.

5.4 ATTITUDINAL DIMENSION

In this section, problem areas are being discussed pertaining to poor work culture and low level of punctuality.

i) Poor Work Culture

A related dimension of organisational behaviour is an unsatisfactory work culture. Poor work culture is characterised by unpunctuality, delays, red-tapism, passing the buck, wasting of official time, lack of coordination and low motivation. Low motivation becomes responsible for treating work as a 'load' by the employees. The notion of 'work-load' is antithesis of the dictum of 'work is worship'. When duty is considered as a 'burden', its impact on the overall morale of the personnel becomes negative. Resultantly, the personnel do not give their best to their organisations and remain occupied with routine work. Creativity and innovation in this atmosphere take a back seat.

ii) Low Punctuality

A significant characteristic of good time management is punctuality. This applies to the punctuality in reaching office, starting official work, initiating projects, starting and ending official meetings, movement of public buses, trains, air flights, opening of schools in the morning, conduct of classes, the presence of teachers and students in educational institutions, the readiness of doctors to attend to patients at the appointed hour and honouring of time by all other functionaries.

In India, there are islands of excellence in punctuality, for instance banks, insurance companies, schools, big hospitals, corporate bodies and a few government organisations. However, in certain countries, including India, there is poor sense of time prevailing in most government organisations. Even though biometric system of attendance is enforced in the Government of India and few state governments, it has yet to become universal. The late comers are thieves of time and so are those who leave their office much before the prescribed closing hours. F.W. Taylor referred to their practice of 'skiving' to control, which the theory of Scientific Management was propounded. When unpunctuality is not punished, it can become a pervasive weakness in official behaviour.

Unpunctuality can have a harmful effect on the total working atmosphere. Generally, unpunctual people become increasingly careless and start taking their responsibilities lightly. Such an attitude is bound to leave a negative impact on the performance as well as the image of an organisation. When trustworthiness of an organisation and its people is compromised, its decline becomes inevitable.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) Does work orientation affect the performance of employees? If yes, how?

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- 2) “Unpunctuality can have a harmful effect on the total working atmosphere”. Comment.

5.5 FUNCTIONAL STYLE

In this section, aspects of ambiguity in determining deadlines for work, procrastination and the operation of the Parkinson’s Law are being analysed.

i) **Ambiguity about Deadlines**

When the deadlines for the completion of a programme, project or scheme are not fixed at the time of their initiation, there is bound to be delay in their execution. There is a common maxim, “goals without deadlines are dead goals”. This maxim implies that when deadlines are not meticulously fixed, there is an ample chance of lingering a particular project. This happens in the case of most government programmes. In a study, made years ago, about certain major government projects taken up since independence, it came to light that most of them could record only about 60 percent of their targets in the time initially earmarked for their completion. As a consequence, cost of the delayed projects went up substantially. The additional investment on the delayed projects is at the cost of other developmental works.

When a particular project is delayed, its side effects are serious. For instance, when the construction of a road designed to link villages with a district or state highway is delayed, there is loss to farmers, for they cannot transport their products to urban mandis; small scale industries at the village level do not get right markets faster; girl students are hesitant to go to secondary schools situated in a nearby city; and some patients with serious complications do not reach good hospitals situated in urban areas on time. There can be endless examples of poor time management becoming the cause of countless untoward incidents. When undue delays occur in the initiation and completion of development projects put citizens to inconvenience, people’s faith in the government’s competence get diminished.

ii) **Procrastination**

In another Unit 7 on ‘Time-wasters and Time-savers’, a relatively more detailed analysis has been done of the characteristics and consequences of procrastination. Here a brief reference to this main attribute of poor time management would be in order. In simple terms, procrastination means ‘delaying action,’ or ‘postponement’ of an activity. This is the most common weakness of time management in developing countries.

Individuals and organisations tend to postpone difficult and complex tasks, but the causes of procrastination may be many more. Certain factors that trigger procrastination are as follows:

- Natural laziness of human being, whether in personal or professional life.
- Incompetence of the personnel in handling particular tasks.

- Tasks, which appear ‘unpleasant’ to persons responsible for performing them.
- Fear of failure in doing a task that carries risks.
- Fear of unknown while undertaking tasks that are unfamiliar and new.
- Habit of ‘passing the buck’, i.e. transferring responsibilities to others.
- Cluttering of routine activities, which make a job dull.
- Lack of will power or experience of the leadership and workers while tackling difficult tasks.
- Scarcity of information, financial resources and technical skills.
- Lack of motivation in performing jobs.
- New leadership, which is not well acquainted with personnel in the organisation and whose style of work is not known to the middle and the lower-level cadres. In such a situation, workers hesitate to act independently and wait for detailed instructions from above, which cause delays.
- *When punishment is rarely meted out to people for non-performance*

There is a pervasive weakness in human nature that if a thing can be postponed, it is postponed. Whenever procrastination is accepted as a part of work culture, job performance suffers substantially. Undoubtedly, procrastination is the crux of poor time management.

iii) **Parkinson’s Law**

C. Northcote Parkinson, a British naval historian, in his well-known book, Parkinson’s Law or the Pursuit of Progress has crafted a principle that “work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion”. He cites interesting examples to prove that in the absence of proper work-time equation, generally extra time is spent on performing most jobs. With the additional time available, a task expands unduly. Even the less important or trivial tasks take longer than the usual time to complete. Parkinson’s Law is applied to most bureaucratic organisations. Only a strict enforcement of rational task-time relationship can check the impact of the Parkinson’s Law.

iv) **Lack of Time Auditing**

Financial audit examines how the official money was spent or invested whether it was as per laws, rules and rational norms or not. However, very few systematic researches have been undertaken on time auditing, although it is no less important than financial auditing.

Time audit involves auditing of the time spent during a particular time-span, say one day or one week. It is done through preparing a ‘time log’ in which brief details are given of the activities undertaken in a day or a week. While undertaking time auditing individuals will mention about the time spent on their health, reading, *pranayama*, meditation, family, friends, socialisation and professional obligations, while the organisations will prepare a time log on the way the official time was spent on activities like planning, policy-making, decision-making, financial management, human resource management, public relations, production of goods and services and their delivery to the consumers or citizens.

It is generally observed that most individuals and organisations avoid auditing time. This results into an imbalance in the life of an individual or an organisation. In the absence of time auditing, one or the other aspects of organisational development gets either over-emphasised or under-emphasised. When time is wasted, under-utilised or wrongly utilised, there is an irreparable damage done

to the overall effectiveness of an organisation. As has been mentioned in Unit 7, those who waste time, time wastes them. This statement applies to individuals as well as organisations. Moreover, time spent irrationally promotes irrationality in organisational behaviour.

Concurrent time audit can minimise Time-wasters, provide optimal emphasis on the essential segments of organisational functioning and enhance organisational effectiveness. Yet, one occasionally notices unbalanced time management in the lives of individuals as well as organisations. The overall impact of such imbalance on job performance is bound to be adverse.

What is the side effect of indifference shown to time auditing? We are deprived of likely gains of time auditing in terms of:

- a) Getting the best out of time.
- b) Increased job performance.
- c) Mid-course correction of lapses and faults in time management.
- d) Energising the organisation through wiser resource management.

5.6 PLANNING SYSTEM

In this section, weaknesses in the planning system and unorganised evaluation of plans are being analysed briefly.

i) Inadequate Planning

Rigorous planning is key to sound time management. It helps in the best possible utilisation of financial and human resources for the achievement of organisational goals—whether regulatory or developmental. However, in an organisation characterised by poor time management, planning is undertaken in a formal manner, but it lacks deadlines and details. In such organisations, planning formulation is lop-sided. There are no specifications regarding the goals to be attained, targets to be achieved, financial investment to be made and human resources required for executing the plans. Besides, plans are not drawn for various segments and divisions of the organisation. This dilutes the responsibilities of various subsystems of the organisation and creates loopholes that reduce the functional effectiveness of organisations. Lack of coordination as a result of inadequate or flawed planning becomes the biggest obstacle to goal-achievement, affecting the job performance.

In an organisation afflicted with poor time management, the implementation plans are either absent or sketchy or inadequate. The consequence of this slippage is poor outcome in terms of quantity and quality. Resultantly job performance is affected adversely.

ii) Inadequate Evaluation

A sound time management system has a pattern of planning that has effectively administered all the three processes—formulation, implementation and evaluation. Rigorous evaluation of plans, projects and schemes is a key factor in the success of any enterprise—economic, social or regulatory. Periodical evaluation of plans is an effective corrective mechanism in planning. Appropriate time management requires efficient evaluation of progress achieved in various segments of a plan in successive time-slots. This process enables plan-administration to examine the areas requiring greater attention in future. Thus, an evaluation process becomes a corrective mechanism in the planning process, facilitating more effective time management.

5.7 STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

This section analyses certain factors that have a close relationship with the efficacy of time management, when certain accepted norms of sound systems management are not followed, poor time management is the outcome of such negligence. Issues related to the quality of systems management, inadequate delegation, Time-wasters, unproductive meetings and lack of 'thinking' time and insufficient time for training are being examined, briefly, below.

i) Poor System Management

In a large number of organisations, poor time management is a result of poor systems management. Unorganised space management, crowded rooms, old furniture, outdated computers, printers, scanners, laptops and replicating machines, unscientific record management, poor inventory control, traditional system of accounting and auditing, old machines, poorly trained workforce, conventional human resource management, unimaginative marketing system and unsatisfactory delivery system lead to low job performance. Interestingly, weaknesses mentioned here are rooted in poor time management. When timely action is not taken to reform various subsystems of an organisation, the result is inadequacy in various segments of a work organisation. This naturally leads to poor job performance. When there is poor record management, resultantly there is disorganisation.

ii) Inadequate Delegation

It has been observed in a large number of public systems, state enterprises, universities, hospitals, academies, etc. that there is very less decentralisation of authority and responsibility. As a result, a whole lot of cases reach the top executive for decisions. Even routine matters that can be decided at the middle level, of hierarchy are sent to the head of the organisation for decisions. This leaves little time with the chief executive to focus on more crucial policies and important decisions. In the government system in several states, even transfers of lower-level functionaries like junior engineers and clerks need the approval of the ministers incharge. This tendency reflects a lack of trust in the officers concerned or a desire to dominate the governance system in order to show one's powers to help or harm the employees. This is against the essential norms of good administration.

When delegation is not adequate and not made to the right person at the appropriate level, its impact is reduced. Inadequate and improper delegation is a characteristic of poor time management. Further, a weakness often seen in public system is that once delegation of a particular task is made to an official, her/his senior does not adequately supervise or monitor the results of that delegation. As a consequence, the spirit of a decision gets compromised. When a mistake is committed by a 'delegatee' (to whom the authority is delegated), the final responsibility lies with the 'delegator' (who delegates authority). Therefore, proper monitoring is a requisite to sound administration.

iii) Time-wasters

In a separate Unit 7, the theme of Time-Wasters and Time-Savers has been elaborated. Here, it is suffice to mention that Time-wasters are a big liability for an organisation. It has an adverse impact on job performance. It has been elaborated separately that there are personal as well as professional time-wasters. Further, both these kind of Time-wasters have two categories – 'controllable' and 'uncontrollable'. The need is to diminish the range of uncontrolled time-wasters

and convert them into controlled Time-wasters. With wisdom and will, all kinds of Time-wasters can be reduced. Yet, adequate efforts are not generally made in most organisations to diminish Time-wasters. As a result, job performance hits a downward trend. This tendency is undoubtedly a trait of poor time management.

iv) Unproductive and Dilatory Meetings

One generally notices the following flaws in the conduct of official meetings in government organisations:

- a) Unclear objectives and vague agenda.
- b) Lack of preparation for meetings.
- c) Agenda points not circulated well in advance for a meeting.
- d) No deadline fixed for a meeting to be over.
- e) Rambling and aimless discussion in a meeting.
- f) Monopolising discussions by a few talkative individuals.
- g) Centralised orders from above, with little scope for open discussion on alternative to problem.
- h) Taking impractical decisions.
- i) Minutes not prepared immediately after the meeting.
- j) Allocation of responsibilities not done adequately for the implementation of the decisions taken.

Meetings characterised by any of the above traits are time-wasters and have adverse impact on job performance.

v) Lack of 'Thinking' Time

In the government systems, certain think tanks are responsible for generating ideas for policy-making. For instance, the NITI Aayog in India, successor to the Planning Commission, does this job at the top level. However, 'think tanks' should have decentralised structures. All ministries, state enterprises and state departments should have their own 'thinking' units that conceive the best alternatives to problems and help in making most rational decisions. However, what is missing in most government system is concerted or collective thinking. Most decisions are made at the top from where the direction to all levels percolates. As a result, most policies in the government are conventional, and there is little innovation and creativity in the policy and decision-making.

In several countries and organisations, the system of 'Quality Circles' comprising senior representatives of important units, which give creative ideas for improving job performance. Such quality circles are catalysts to prudent policy-making and implementation. Besides, many organisations apply the techniques of 'brainstorming' that generates host of ideas for problem solving. The techniques of think tanks, quality circles and brainstorming consume very little time and yet they have a long-term positive impact on job performance. What is disturbing is that in most government system, these techniques are only sparingly used. This is an indicator of poor time management. In order to get the best out of time, instruments of collective thinking are requisite to good job performance. But this does not happen often is a matter of concern.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

- 1) Enumerate any seven factors that trigger procrastination.

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- 2) Analyse the role of inadequate planning and evaluation in poor time management, which affects job performance.

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5.8 CONCLUSION

The biggest problem before all organisations – whether governmental, corporate or social—is to get the best out of time. Time is the main resource that creates all other resources. Hence, rational or prudent time management is the key to success of organisations and to the happiness of people. Poor time-management is characterised by unpunctuality, delays, procrastination, Time-wasters, laziness, inadequate planning, faulty systems management, poor work culture, Time-wasters and other negative facets of organisational behaviour that obstruct the best use of time as per the requirements of identified goals. In this unit, several salient features of poor time management have been briefly discussed.

The need, therefore, is to control the causes of poor time management through structural redesigning, work studies, refine processes, effective monitoring, proper motivation, and other techniques of time.

5.9 GLOSSARY

Emergent matters: It refers to matters, which are in the process of coming into being or becoming prominent.

Discussion Rambling: It means discussion in a meeting, which is without a specific goal, purpose or direction or too long and confused.

5.10 REFERENCES

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5.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Refer to Section 5.3 for your answer.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Refer to Section 5.4 (ii) for your answer.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Natural laziness of human being, whether in personal or professional life.
 - Incompetence of the personnel in handling particular tasks.
 - Tasks, which appear ‘unpleasant’ to persons responsible for performing them.
 - Fear of failure in doing a task that carries risks.
 - Fear of unknown while undertaking tasks that are unfamiliar and new.
 - Habit of ‘passing the buck’, i.e. transferring responsibilities to others.
 - Cluttering of routine activities, which make a job dull.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Inadequate Planning.
 - Inadequate Evaluation.

UNIT 6 STRESS AND HEALTH: EFFECTS ON HEALTH, JOB PERFORMANCE AND RELATIONSHIPS*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Effect of Stress on Physical Health
- 6.3 Effect of Stress on Performance
- 6.4 Effect of Stress on Relationships
- 6.5 Conclusion
- 6.6 Glossary
- 6.7 References
- 6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the consequences of work stress on physical health;
- Describe the relationship between stress and performance; and
- Examine the effect of stress on relationships at work.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The word stress now appears frequently in our everyday language as it has an effect on all aspects of our lives and consequently, there has been rapid advancement in research and public consciousness of stress and its outcomes. It is now widely recognised that stress can influence our physical and mental health adversely. The collective scientific literature from various fields such as medical science, physiology, neuroscience, psychoneuroimmunology and health psychology, associating stress to negative health consequences, is strong (O'Connor, Thayer & Vedhara, 2021).

Stress, through autonomic and neuroendocrine responses, can directly affect our health. However, indirectly also stress can have a negative effect on our health. This is owing to certain modifications in our health-related behaviours including undesirable changes in diet and eating habits such as, excessive fat intake or consuming a lesser amount of fiber, fruits or vegetables. Consequently, it may have some bearing on obesity, cardiovascular disease, and cancer risk (e.g., Hill et al. 2018, O'Connor et al. 2008, Tomiyama, 2019). In this Unit, we will first examine the effect of stress on health, followed by a discussion on the impact of stress on performance as well as relationships at work.

6.2 EFFECT OF STRESS ON PHYSICAL HEALTH

The impact of stress on health has also been observed from the lens of the Allostatic Load (AL) model. The concept of allostatic load was put forward by

* Contributed by Prof. Preetam Khandelwal, Professor, University of Delhi, New Delhi

McEwen (1998) describes the wear and tear that the human body undergoes owing to recurrent and long-standing exposure to stress. According to the model of allostatic overload, there are damaging consequences of stress on our physiological systems when a huge number of stress mediators are discharged to help us adjust, but their disproportionate, persistent, and frequent overuse and dysregulation could eventually cause harm. In essence, allostatic load is shown by the inefficient switching on and off of what is named as stress mediators and, in certain instances, their inability to produce an acceptable response when required, for example, when the body discharges too little or excessive cortisol when confronted with an acutely stressful situation. The long-term impact of exposure to stress distresses the body at the cardiovascular, metabolic, neural, behavioural, and cellular levels and increases the risk of developing diseases (McEwen, 1998) as the biological systems are unable to function effectively.

Stress and Physical Ailments

Medical scientists have provided evidence with respect to the relationship between stress and various physical ailments such as coronary heart disease (CHD), ulcers, diabetes, arthritis, cirrhosis of liver, lung diseases, backache, headache etc. Additionally, excessive stress slows down the immune system of the body as substantiated by work on, psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) a field, which studies “the interactions among behavioral, neural and endocrine function, and immune processes”, (Ader & Cohen, 1993). Stress not only leads to depression, anxiety and worry but also negatively influences health related actions like eating, exercising, and sleeping. The physical symptoms include the following:

i) Cardiovascular Disorders

According to WHO (2020) among the top ten reasons of death worldwide, heart disease has remained the main cause of death for the last two decades. Currently, it represents 16 percent of total deaths globally. The number of deaths from heart disease increased by more than 2 million since 2000, to nearly 9 million in 2019.

Mostly, biomedical research has focused on the physical bases of heart problems, however, contemporary research studies have also directed attention on psycho-social and lifestyle causes for cardiovascular diseases. These include personality disposition, nutritional behaviours, physical activities, usage of addictive substances, nature of occupation, socio-economic environment and unquestionably stress. When an individual perceives any experience as stressful, the heart works quicker and harder, displaying an intensified cardiovascular reactivity in the form of high blood pressure, and rise in heart rate. In stress-anxiety reaction owing to the stimulation of sympathetic nervous system, blood pressure increases, usually lasting for a few hours. This situation rises with persistent stress where sympathetic arousal is extended resulting in chronic hypertension (Ghosh, 2015).

Sympathetic arousal and stress also have an added critical effect. Even without any wound, the propensity for blood to clot increases, causing a build up of blood platelets called thrombocytes, which become part of the arterial plaques. Consequently, the heart has to work extremely hard to squeeze blood and allow it to flow. Eventually, this chronic wear and tear can be the reason for substantial harm to the heart and arteries. In addition, stress raises certain secretions by endocrine glands called catecholamine and corticosteroid. Prolonged high levels of these hormones influence the arteries and heart leading to hypertension and hardening of arteries. Stress could cause cardiac arrhythmia (which arises when electrical impulses in the heart don't work properly), triggering cardiac arrest and even sudden death.

In India, a number of people with hypertension is expected to increase from 118.2 million in 2000 to 213 million in 2025, (Ghosh,2015). Hypertension persisting for several weeks can be a major risk for Coronary Heart Disease Stroke, and Kidney Disease can lead to untimely death. Higher Blood Pressure (BP), and responses to psychological stress (e.g. greater reactivity as well as higher recovery levels) were associated with 21 percent greater risk of elevated BP eleven years later, compared to those with smaller BP responses (Gasperin et al.,2009)). Thus, it has been recommended that management of psychological stress may be an important element of hypertension management

Relationship of Cortisol to Future Health Risk

It is well known that people who display inflated cortisol responses to stress are at higher risk of future ailments. However, recent findings have concluded that even low or blunted cortisol reactivity to stress is related to high levels of chronic stress and increased risk of negative physical and mental health outcomes,(O'Connor et al. 2017, Zorn et al. 2017). Lower cortisol stress reactivity is now linked to obesity and the risk of developing obesity as well as symptoms of depression and anxiety (O'Connor, Thayer & Vedhara, 2021). Besides, people who had earlier made a suicide attempt demonstrated low levels of cortisol in response to an acute stressor (O'Connor et al., 2017). Briefly, the evidence now indicates that both increased and blunted cortisol responses to acute stressors are correlated with high future health risk indicating a nonlinear inverted-U relationship, signifying that both high and low levels of cortisol are likely to be injurious to health.

ii) Peptic Ulcer

Peptic ulcer appears when excess gastric juices are released to digest food. This kind of ulcer is also called the stress ulcer. It may be caused by several physical factors like bacterial infection or overuse of painkillers. However, persistent activation of the sympathetic nervous system creating surplus hydrochloric acid and pepsin (as it occurs during stress) too plays a significant role in its occurrence.

iii) Allergies

Developing allergies is one way, the immune system works. Lifestyle modifications frequently occurring in schools, home, work environment, marriage etc. and substantial daily stresses like overwork and interpersonal problems precede the occurrence of urticaria, a form of allergy (Ghosh, 2015).

iv) Asthma

This is a very common type of allergy because of its wide occurrence. In this respiratory disorder the hindrance of bronchial airways occurs due to inflammation, spasms and mucous creating breathing problems. Asthma attacks are caused by allergies, respiratory infections and biopsychic-social arousal such as stress. An asthmatic attack begins very frequently as a consequence of a stressful episode such as serious family conflict, unmanageable work pressure or poor performance appraisal (Ghosh, 2015).

v) Persistent headache

The most frequent headaches are tension headache and migraine headache. In this regard, tension headache is a result of continued contraction of the head and neck muscles that characteristically occurs as a stress reaction.

Migraine headache occurs owing to the dilation of blood vessels surrounding the brain that leads to antagonizing pain on one side of the head, near the temple and may last for hours and sometimes days. Some of the common causes of migraine and tension headache include stress-causing incidents like a clash with a co-worker

or the strain to meet a deadline. However, sometimes individuals with chronic headache get the attack even when there is no apparent stress while others may fail to get even under acute stress, (Ghosh,2015).

Some other effects of stress on health

There are medical speculations that cancer may be related to certain psychological factors including stress. There is also strong indication that psychological stress is linked to an increased risk of infectious diseases, and that it can be generalised through a variety of pathogens. For example, with respect to the common cold, it was found that, people at highest risk of illness are those struggling with chronic stressors (of one month or longer period) and for whom the sources of stress are interpersonal or work related (Cohen et al,1998).

Stress can influence the phases of sexual response cycle, biologically by neuro-endocrine mechanisms and psychologically by negative thoughts such as anxiety, guilt, negative self-image (Venkataramu & Basavarajappa, 2021).

The occurrence of stress is also related to affective reactions such as mood disturbances, (Zohar, 1999), as an outcome of high workload, and stressful achievement settings (Pekrun & Frese, 1992). In the long run, well-being and mental health may suffer as longitudinal studies suggest that stressful work situations are related to an increased level of depressive symptoms (Schonfeld, 1992) and Burnout.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) Explain the Allostastic Load model.

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2) What are the effects of stress on physical health?

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6.3 EFFECT OF STRESS ON PERFORMANCE

Organisational stress can impact not just the well-being and health of employees but can also affect performance. Job performance has been viewed, “as an activity in which an individual is able to accomplish successfully the task/goal assigned to him, subject to the normal constraint of the reasonable utilisation of available resources” (Jamal, 1984).

From a theoretical perspective, four kinds of associations between job stress and job performance have been proposed:

- *a negative linear relationship,*
- *a positive linear relationship,*

- *a curvilinear/U-shaped relationship, and*
 - *no relationship between the two (Jamal, 1984).*
- i) A *negative correlation* between job stress and performance was considered by researchers who regarded job stress as basically non-functional for the organisation and its personnel. Persistent job stress is extremely unpleasant to most employees, creating a harmful situation in the work environment (Gupta & Beehr, 1979; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snook, & Rosenthal, 1964; Westman & Eden, 1996). In such situations, people devote a considerable amount of their time and energy managing their stress, thus unfavorably influencing their performance.

Various studies have exhibited a negative linear relationship between different factors of job stress and job performance and performance-like variables (Beehr, Walsh, & Taber, 1976; Breaugh, 1980; Schuler, 1975). In a meta-analysis, (Muse et al., 2003), as many as 24 (46%) of the 52, research findings examined, reported a negative linear relationship between the job stress and job performance.

- ii) The supporters of a *positive correlation between job stress and performance* look at problems, difficulties or challenges as opportunities for productive actions and better performance and propose that at a low level of stress, the person does not confront any challenge and, thus, is not prone to display any better-quality performance. At a moderate level of stress, the person is moderately stimulated in terms of challenge and accordingly will display average performance. However, at a high level of stress, the person faces optimum level of challenge and thus, performance will increase. While, overall, laboratory research showed that stressors damage basic cognitive processes, field studies indicate that this damage does not automatically result in a decrease in overall job performance. Predominantly, workload was associated with better job performance. These conclusions imply that people spend more effort to select the most relevant tasks, and use compensatory approaches for maintaining their performance under stressful circumstances (Jamal, 2007). But, evidence from a meta-analysis (Muse et.al.,2003), indicates that just 7 (13%) of 52 empirical studies supported a positive linear relationship between the job stress and job performance. Perhaps eventually, it depletes a person's resources and adversely affects an individual's health and well-being and could lead to burnout.
- iii) The *curvilinear/U-shaped association between job stress and performance*, is derived from the initial work of Yerkes and Dodson (1908) and motivated by the activation theory, (Scott, 1966). It is also one of the most accepted models with respect to the various organisational Behaviour textbooks (for e.g. Ivancevich. J.M; Konopaske & Matteson, (2013); Robbins & Judge, 2017; Nelson et.al.,2013) This is mainly due to its intuitive appeal (Jamal, 2016), despite the limitations of the model due to the scarcity of significant empirical findings (Jamal, 2007).

The rationale seems to be that when subjected to low stress at the job, a person is most probably not motivated and thus, would not display better performance. However, if the person undergoes an excessive level of chronic job stress it may lead to devoting more time in coping with stress and thus, efforts on the job may decrease, resulting in lower level of performance. This framework promotes, that an optimum level of stress is ideal for job performance because, at such levels, the person is not only motivated but

also skilled to direct energies toward improved job performance. While several laboratory studies, have favoured this proposition (Baddeley, 1972; Cohen, 1980), field studies which tested the expected curvilinear association between stressors and performance did not find such a relationship (e.g., Jamal, 1985; Westman& Eden, 1996).

Meta-analysis has revealed that barely 2 (4%) of the 52 empirical studies supported the existence of a U-shaped/curvilinear relationship between stress and performance, (Muse et al., 2003). This might be because other variables such as individual competence or work and organisational commitment (Jamal, 1985) might have moderated the relationship between stressors and job performance.

- iv) Finally, the premise that no correlation exists between job stress and performance is derived from the psychological contract process between the person and the organisation. People are viewed as rational human beings who are mainly worried about performance, since they recognise that they are paid for their performance, on the job and will not let their performance be shaped by difficulties in the work environment. Hence, their performance will remain largely similar in the presence of high chronic job stress or in the absence of it. Job stress is thus, viewed as neither leading to improved performance nor reduced performance, but slightly as a neutral state for job performance. This account contradicts results from laboratory studies that showed stressors to damage essential cognitive processes. However, damage of basic cognitive processes may not essentially lead to a decline in overall job performance in actual work settings. People are competent in compensating for the effects of stressor for example, by changing to different task approaches, (Sperandio, 1971). Additionally, certain cognitive strategies influenced by stressors in laboratory settings play only a slight role in actual-life settings (Klein, 1996). For example, in comparison to real-life work tasks, laboratory tasks are comparatively simple, trivial, and under-learned while real-life work tasks, are generally well- learned and complex, and people frequently have the needed skills to follow diverse strategies (Hockey, 2000). Furthermore, in organisational settings, goal accomplishment is given high importance thus, task performance if necessary may be at the expense of better effort or disregard of lesser activities.

Data from the meta-analysis, however indicated, only 6 (12%), of the 52 empirical studies maintained that there exists no association between job stress and job performance (Muse et al., 2003 cited by Jamal, 2007).

Challenge-Hindrance Stress Model and its relationship to Performance

The Challenge-Hindrance Stress (CHM), Model (Cavanaugh et al, 2000), postulates that workplace stressors are of two types. Firstly, there are a group of challenge stressors such as, high work load, time pressure and high levels of responsibility that promote performance and are viewed to be under the employee's control. If managed, they might provide a chance for personal growth. Secondly, there are a group of hindrance stressors such as, organisational policies, red tape, work role ambiguity and resource inadequacy. These interfere with performance and are generally perceived to be beyond the control of the employees and may limit chances for personal growth. Notwithstanding the popularity of this model, current evidence indicates that the suggested differential relationship hypothesis has not been consistently reinforced for all types of strain (Horanetal, 2020).

However, an interesting finding (Jamal, 2016), indicates, that while there exists a negative linear association between of job stress and performance, ‘Perceived social support’, was found to moderate more than eighty percent of the relationship between job stress and job performance and turnover motive. Thus, social support seems to be more helpful as a buffer for persons undergoing hindrance stress rather than challenge stress. Employees who faced high hindrance stress but were blessed to have high social support did not decrease their performance as persistently in contrast to employees who had excessive hindrance stress and low perceived social support. Hence, increasing social support at the work place may be a critical tool in reducing some of the unpleasant outcomes of job stress.

Sexual Harassment at the Workplace and its relationship to Performance

It is globally recognised that sexual harassment is a source of significant stress and anxiety at the workplace. In India, it has recently received considerable attention, especially after the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Organisations are progressively becoming intolerant of sexual harassment at the workplace. Predominantly, sexual harassment is targeted at women in the workplace and is a chronic nevertheless preventable workplace problem. It leads to an extremely stressful work environment for the individual being harassed as well as for other women at the work place. Sexual harassment is associated with reduced productivity and performance for the complainant as well as the respondent both. Additionally, it also negatively impacts the workgroup or team performance as they are demoralised by sexual harassment incidents.

6.4 EFFECT OF STRESS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Individual and organisational effectiveness is contingent upon a healthy and positive work environment, where people are not only eager to share information and resources, but at the same time are willing to offer as well as receive a helping hand from each other.

The performance of organisational members is influenced by their ability to effectively interact with their superiors, subordinates and co-workers within the organisation. When employees are exposed to excessive emotional demands, they are more likely to manage them if they receive appropriate support from their colleagues. When supervisors cooperate with employees and listen to their grievances, the employees are able to garner resources to reduce their stress. The “demand-control-support” model (Karasek, 1979; Johnson & Hall, 1988) asserts that when support is provided by supervisors and co-workers, it assists to protect employees against damaging effects of high demands and low levels of control. Helpful relationships at the work place with colleagues and superiors may thus, lessen, stressful situations. Besides, it has been found that employees who cultivate good relationships with their supervisors and co-workers are usually effective and productive at work, despite high levels of job stress (Cummins, 1990).

However, interpersonal interactions on the job can sometimes be detrimental and relationships with colleagues and supervisors can, consequently, be a source of stress, especially when conflicts develop among co-workers. The most common type of interpersonal conflicts are task and relationship conflicts. Task conflict indicates conflict conditions developing from task-related matters, like opposing views concerning the objectives of a task, while relationship conflict denotes personality clashes and/or emotionally charged interactions with others owing to personal issues. Unfavourable interactions at the workplace can range from a mild

form like uncivil behaviour – wherein a person could find the other person to be rude and insensitive to the other extreme – where an employee can be physically violent at the workplace. For example, doctors were assaulted during the first and second phase of Covid-19 pandemic, in several hospitals in India. The conflict could also be covert, for example spreading damaging rumors about them.

Interpersonal conflict as a source of stress has been related to a variety of employee's health outcomes at the physical level, such as cardio-vascular disease, increased blood pressure and heart rate, stomach upset, or headaches, and at the psychological level it has been related to negative emotions like anxiety or anger or even depression. At the behavioural level it may include, alcohol consumption or smoking (Bruk-Lee and Spector, 2012). Such interpersonal stressors are also associated with turnover intentions and actual employee turnover, (Chen & Spector, 1992) which in turn, negatively affects performance.

Eventually, stress reactions at work might not be restricted to the person who is exposed to the stressful situation but can spill over to the family domain as well and adversely affect marital relationships (Story and Repetti, 2006), and parent-child interactions (Repetti & Wood, 1997; Roeters, van der Lippe & Kluwer, 2010).

To conclude, it may be mentioned that while there is significant value in understanding the effect of job stress on employee's health, performance and relationships at work, it is also essential to recognise that the relationships among these variables are not as simple as there are contingencies that may come into play to impact the key outcome variables of stress. This is because, a variety of moderator variables influence the impact of stress on the outcome variables discussed, which is beyond the scope of this unit but which include among others, management styles, organisational culture, organisational commitment, job characteristics, individual competence, personality and social support. However, it is evident that organisational stress adversely affects the health and well-being of employees and thus, managing work stress is critical so that neither the employees' health nor their performance or relationships suffer inevitably.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) List the four kinds of associations between job stress and job performance.

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2) Explain the “demand-control-support” model.

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6.5 CONCLUSION

The effect of stress on physical health has been examined from an interdisciplinary perspective as it is a topic of interest to physicians, physiologists, neuroscientists, people working in the area of psychoneuroimmunology and health psychology. It is now well known that stress can negatively affect our physical and mental health, and we have discussed the Allostatic Load Model in this context. In brief, the allostatic overload concept supports the view that stress disturbs multiple biological systems, which interact with one another to adapt and react to the varying environmental demands that are noticed as stressful. Stress is related to various physical illnesses such as Coronary Heart Disease, hypertension, ulcers, diabetes, arthritis, asthma, persistent headache, sexual dysfunction etc. Besides, chronic, long-term stress also weakens our immune system.

In this unit, we have also discussed the impact of stress on performance and relationships at work. With respect to the effect of stress on performance, by and large, the research has indicated a negative association between stress and job performance. The Challenge-Hindrance Model was also elucidated in this context. The performance of employees is also influenced by their ability to effectively interact with their superiors, subordinates and co-workers. The role of support is significant in protecting employees from the damaging effects of high demands and low level of control. Furthermore, interpersonal conflict as a source of stress is related to health outcomes such as CHD, hypertension and headaches, and often generates negative feelings at the workplace.

While reviewing the effect of job stress on outcomes such as employee's health, performance and relationships at work, it is also essential to recognise that the relationships among these variables are far more complex as there are various moderator factors that may come into play to impact the key outcomes variables of stress, which include management styles, organisational culture, organisational commitment, job characteristics, individual competence, personality and social support.

6.6 GLOSSARY

The Allostatic Load (AL): It refers to the wear and tear that the human body undergoes owing to recurrent and long-standing exposure to stress.

Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI): It refers to the field, which studies the interactions among behavioral, neural, endocrine function and immune processes.

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6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - The model of Allostatic Load, refers to the wear and tear that the human body undergoes owing to recurrent and long-standing exposure to stress. Consequently, there are damaging consequences of stress on our physiological systems. While a host of stress mediators are discharged to help us adjust, but their disproportionate, persistent, and frequent overuse and dysregulation eventually causes harm to the body.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Refer to Section 6.2 for your answer.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - The four kinds of associations proposed between job stress and job performance are as follows:
 - a negative linear relationship,
 - a positive linear relationship,
 - a curvilinear/U-shaped relationship, and
 - no relationship between the two.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - The “demand-control-support” model, emphasises, that when support is offered by supervisors or co-workers, it aids to protect employees against damaging effects of high demands and low levels of control. Helpful relationships at the work place with co-workers and superiors may thus, lessen, stressful situations. Employees, who maintain good interpersonal relationships at work are usually effective and productive at work, despite high levels of job stress.