

Consequences of Stress



An individual experiences stress through psychological emotions and is disseminated through psychological breakdown or biological changes. However stress is not negative always. Stress has also positive consequences. The positive form of stress is known as eustress (means good stress). Mild stress elevates body metabolic and biological rates. The increase in the metabolism leads to secretion of juices from body glands that will increase the inner drive for achievement. Achievement motivation comes from deep intention, mild tensions, inner urge, fire and feeling of restlessness to achieve objectives. Stress helps in the development of people too. In its mild form it enhances job performance, leads to excellence and provides impetus to work hard and perform better.

Individuals involved in the discharge of professional oriented jobs, jobs involving creativity, challenge, interpersonal communications and certain managerial jobs, will be benefited by stress, which leads to positive performances. However, jobs involving physical effort do not get benefit out of stress. Some positive consequences are: increased productivity, positive response to target, development of proper perception in the decision-making, increased motivation and performance, increased adaptability to change and increased quality of job performance. However, in the modern organizations the negative consequences of stress are creating more problems. As pointed out by Schuler, Kahn & Byosiore, stress leads to high blood pressure, ulcer, cancer, accident proneness and irritation. Though there is no perfect association between stress and its consequences, stress itself demonstrates into physiological, psychological, behavioral, job and organizational consequences.

- 1. Physiological Consequences:** Stress influences the biological system of the human being. Certain visible forms of stress are increased blood, pressure, proneness to heart disease, cancer, sweating, dry mouth, hot and cold flashes, frustration, anxiety, depression, increased level of cholesterol, ulcer, arthritis, etc. Physical stress increases the body metabolic rate. This results into malfunctioning of internal gland and consequently the body disorder.

2. **Psychological Consequences:** Psychological consequences are interrelated to consequences. They are invisible, but affect the employees' job performance. Psychological stress creates a pressure on human brain. This is expressed in terms of certain psychological symptoms such as anger, anxiety, depression, nervousness, irritation, tension, boredom, aggressiveness, moodiness, hostility and poor concentration. Tensions, anxiety, and emotions lead to procrastination. Psychological stress produces interpersonal aggressions, misunderstanding in communication, poor interpersonal communication and low interpersonal attraction.
3. **Behavioral Consequences:** Stress has an impact on employee's behavior. An abnormal behavior is observed in those individuals who are prone to stress. A change in eating habits, sleep disorder, increased smoking, alcoholism, fidgeting and unfriendliness are some of the behavioral changes observed in stressful employees. Sometimes stress leads to anxiety, apathy, depression and emotional disorder. This leads to impulsive and aggressive behavior and frequent interpersonal conflicts.
4. **Organizational Consequences:** Stress has negative impact on the performance of the job. Organizations face the problems of poor performance and other negative consequences. Some of them are described below:
 - a) **Absenteeism:** Employees subject to stress were found to addict to drugs and alcohol. Thus, they abstain from the jobs frequently. This creates discontinuity in the jobs and adversely affects performance of other employees.
 - b) **Turnover:** Turnover and stress have shown some relationships. An employee experiencing continued stress develops disgust and frustration. Therefore, they are likely to change their jobs.
 - c) **Decision-making:** Excessive stress distorts perception of managers. This adversely affects their capacity to take decision. Thus, stressful executives become irrational in the decision-making. This leads to loss of organizational resources and reputation.
 - d) **Disturbed Customer Relationships:** Employees experiencing excessive stress develop irritation, loses emotional stability and emotional tolerance. Intolerance impels them to pick up conflicts easily due to misunderstandings. Employees dealing with the customers and the public disturb relationship due to their impatient behavior. For instance sales persons, bank employees, public relation executives are required to be more emotionally stable. Otherwise, customers dealing with them will have trouble in dealing with the company. This also creates poor impression on the Carr corporate image of the organization.

Management of Stress

Stress is inevitable in human life. There is, therefore, no way out but to cope with stress or fight with it. There are two types of strategies that can help the employee to cope with stress, namely, the coping strategies at the organizational level and the coping strategies at the individual level.

1) Coping Strategies at the Organizational Level

Organizations can use the following techniques to overcome stress:

- a) **Stress Reduction and Stress Management Programmes:** Stress reduction programmes aim to identify relevant organizational stressors and to reduce their effects by redesigning jobs, reallocating workloads, improving supervisory skills, providing more autonomy or job variety. Stress management schemes usually focus on training individual employees, or their workgroups, to manage their stress symptoms in more effective ways. Stress control systems usually combine stress reduction (stressor control) with stress management (individual symptom control).
- b) **Job Redesign:** Jobs may be a source of stress to many individuals. Properly designed jobs and work schedules can help ease stress in the individuals and the organization.
- c) **Collateral Programmes:** A collateral stress programme is an organizational programme specifically created to help employees deal with stress. Organizations have adopted stress handling programmes, health promotion programmes, career development programmes, and other kinds of programmes for this purpose.
- d) **Counseling:** Counseling is discussion of a problem with an employee with a view to helping the employee cope with it better. Counseling seeks to improve employee's mental health by the release of emotional tension which is also known as emotional catharsis. People will get an emotional release from their frustrations and other problems whenever they have an opportunity to tell someone about them.
- e) **Meditation:** Another way to reduce stress is meditation. Meditation involves quiet, concentrated inner thought in order to rest the body physically and emotionally. It helps remove a person from a stressful world temporarily.

2) Coping Strategies by Individuals

Individuals can use the following techniques to overcome stress:

- a) **Relaxation:** Coping with stress requires adaptation. Proper relaxation is an effective way to adapt. Relaxation can take many forms. One way to relax is to take regular vacations. A

recent study found that people's attitudes toward a variety of work-place characteristics improved significantly following a vacation. People can also relax while on the job. For example, it has been recommended that people should take regular rest breaks during their normal workday. A popular way of resting is to sit quietly with closed eyes for about ten minutes every afternoon.

- b) **Time Management:** Time management is often recommended for managing stress. The idea is that many daily pressures can be eased if a person does a better job of managing time. One popular approach to time management is to make a list every morning of the things to be done that day. The things to be done may be assigned in the list according to their importance. This strategy helps people get more of the important things done every day. It also encourages delegation of less important activities to others.
- c) **Management of Self Role:** Under this, the individual works to avoid role overload, role ambiguity and role conflict. For instance, if a worker does not know what is expected of him, he should ask for classification from his boss. A worker should accept extra work if he feels that he would be able to do that.
- d) **Support Group:** It is a group of friends or family members with whom a person can share his feelings. Supportive family and friends can help people cope with routine types of stress on an ongoing basis.