Stress and Work

- Frequently, people define themselves based on what they do for a living.
- Work can be both fulfilling and a major source of stress.

Academic stress among university students

- Stress has been known "to be the fuel the body uses to meet the challenges of our fast-paced modern life; for others, it is the aversive by-product of such a life" (Altmaier, 1983, p. 4).
- Stress has been associated with major life events, daily life hassles, and changes in life. Stress is created by excessive environmental and internal demands that need constant effort and adjustment.
- Many undergraduate undergo considerable stress due to the demands associated with change: leaving home, becoming independent decision makers, and competing against new standards (Altmaier, 1983).

Problems of college students differs from their non-students peers (Hirsch & Ellis, 1996). Different environment, expectations, continuous academic evaluation, pressure to earn a degree; unclear assignments, to many?; relationship with lecturer
- College students particularly freshmen are prone to stress (D’Zurilla & Sheedy, 1991)
- Due to transitional nature of college life (Towbes & Cohen, 1996). Adjustment problems
- Issue: which stressor is positive and negative?
JOB STRESSOR

Factor influencing job satisfaction and performance (Albrecht, 1979; Wood & Wood 1999)

- Work overload – too much work and too little time to complete. Resulting in anxiety, frustration, low self esteem and boredom.
- Clarity of job specifications and assessment criteria – role ambiguity and lack of clarity in job assessment can result in low job satisfaction. Rigid job spec can result in workers lacking creativity and initiative.

- Physical environment and nature of job – temperature, noise, humidity, pollution, personal, space, lack of or two much movement
- Job status – jobs with low social status can result in low self esteem, and vv. High status position/workers are vulnerable to power abuse
- Job with too much or lack of stimulation, repetitive, multi tasking – higher job stress

Cont’d

- Level of interaction – too much or too little?
- Physically demanding - or not?
- Accountability overload – high job responsibility but end result is unpredictable. Eg: Medical Doctor, nurses, airport traffic controller have high Aos
- Mental challenge – too much/little?
- Decision latitude – degree to exercise initiative and skills to control working conditions. High/low?
Karasek’s “job strain” model states that the greatest risk to physical and mental health from stress occurs to workers facing high psychological workload demands or pressures combined with low control or decision latitude in meeting those demands.

Robert Karasek originally developed and provided evidence the “job strain” concept and model. Karasek (1979) argues that work stress & the resulting physical & mental health effects of work stress, result “not from a single aspect of the work environment, but from the joint effects of the demands of a work situation and the range of decision-making freedom (discretion) available to the worker facing those demands... Job strain occurs when job demands are high and job decision latitude is low”

Karasek’s (1979) Job Demands-Control model (JDC model)

- A leading work stress model in occupational health psychology since the 1980s.
- Assumption that a psychological work environment can be characterized by a combination of the demands of the work situation and the amount of control employees have with which to cope with these demands.
- Whereas early formulations of the JDC model mainly focused on the effects of various combinations of job demands and job control on stress and health-related outcomes (Karasek, 1979);
The JDC model distinguishes between four different job types. In low control/high demands (or 'high strain') jobs high levels of strain and relatively low levels of learning are predicted because the individual cannot respond optimally to situational demands (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

The low control/high demands jobs are commonly referred to as 'high strain jobs'.

The relationship between job stress, psychological demands and control (Karasek & Theorell, 1981)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERCEIVED PSYCHOLOGICAL DEMAND</th>
<th>CONTROL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOW</td>
<td>LOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High job satisfaction (not pathogenic)</td>
<td>Most pathogenic, high catecholamines, high cortisol (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least pathogenic (3)</td>
<td>Second most pathogenic (2)</td>
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- psychological demands of job
- degree of control in the job
- model: high demands + high control = satisfaction (but also some stress)
- high demands + low control = worst situation for stress (e.g. sales clerk, receptionist, nurse's aide, assembly line worker, food server)
- low demands + low control = second worst situation for stress
- low demands + high control = best situation for stress (but possibility of low satisfaction)
If high job demands occur in conjunction with high job control ('active' jobs), employees are thought to be able to deal with these demands, protecting them from excessive strain. Learning and feelings of mastery may result. These, in turn, may help the person to cope with the inevitable strain-inducing situations of the job, resulting in reduced strain and even higher levels of productivity (Karasek & Theorell, 1990).

High stress – High strain jobs (Karasek & Theorell, 1981)

- Nurses
- Construction workers
- Clerks
- Police
- Secretaries
- Firefighters
- Cashiers
- Telephone operators
- Assembly line factory worker
Two important implication

- Beware of jobs with high responsibility **BUT** low power of decision making. Beware **OF** jobs with high perceived psychological demand from the employer **BUT** with low control (authority) over it.
- Worker’s jobs satisfaction and health depend on their perception of responsibility and power they possess.

ROLE OF PERCEPTION

- Smith et al, 1992; 1995: mathematical models of control indicate that it is the psychological discord caused by perceived lack of control which causes stress.
- Silly poem: Two men looked out from prison bars. One saw mud, the other saw stars.
- Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.
- Need to identify workplace factors which are likely to be perceived as stressful.

Stressor based on Occupational Stress Model (Greenberg, 2002)

- Stressor intrinsic to the job
- Related to one’s role and job specification
- Career development
- Related to relationship at work
- Due to organizational structure and climate
3 major categories of job stress (Girdano et al, 1997)

- Organizational
- Individual
- Work environment

Organizational Stressors (Girdano et al, 1997)

- Unsatisfactory monetary rewards
- Lack of career advancement and guidance
- Overspecialization
- Work overload and time pressure
- Decision making pressure
- Job complexity

Work Environment Stressor (Girdano et al, 1997)

- Changes in work procedures and technology
- Changes in work method and technology
- Change in job location
- Career advancement
- Violence at the workplace
- Retirement
- Bioecological factors – such as work schedule, noise levels, lighting factors, temperature, ergonomics, privacy, personal space)
Individual Stressors

- Frustration
- Work and role conflict
- Interpersonal communication and problems
- Discrimination
- Bureaucracy
- Lack of activity and boredom

Example of medical doctor stressors

- Work overload especially in govt hospital
- Fatigue – lack of rest
- Frustration and anxiety – caring for patients whose illnesses are difficult to diagnose
- Caring for terminally ill patients
- Lack of vacation, disrupted holiday
- Shift work, unpredicted hours, on call
- Problems with other worker
- Problems in balancing career and family

A Model of Occupational Stress
Burnout (Wood and Wood, 1999)

- A situation where stress is extremely high and endless
- Workers feel pessimistic, unsatisfied, inefficient, lack of energy, easily fall sick, losing interest in work
- A result of job stress that was not properly handled

Cont’d

In the last stage of burnout, individuals might face dysfunctions, insanity and depression
- There is a strong relationship between number of work hours per week and burnout
- Those who work 80 hours per week are most likely to experience burnout

Burnout Syndrome

- Stage 1: (The honeymoon) individual is initially satisfied and enthusiastic with job, however task become un-enjoyable and worker loses energy.
- Stage 2: (Fuel shortage) constant fatigue sets in, difficulty sleeping; self-medication
- Stage 3: (chronic symptoms) overwork leads to physical illness, constant fatigue, depression, anger
Burnout Syndrome (2)

- Stage 4: (crisis) increased physical illness; worker takes sick time; relationships suffer at home; pessimism and self-doubt sets in.
- Stage 5: (hitting the wall) physical and psychological problems cause life threatening illnesses; worker has so many problems at work that their career is threatened.

Burnout: a condition of emotional exhaustion and negative attitude.

A Model of Burnout

Personal Stressors
- Emotional Exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Feeling a Lack Of Personal Accomplishment

Job and Organizational Stressors
- Attitudinal and Behavioral Symptoms

Some effect of burnout
- Diminished sense of humor
- Skip rest and break
- Increase overtime work
- No vacation
- Increase physiological complaints
- Withdrawal from interpersonal relations
- Change in job performance
ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY TO REDUCE STRESS
(ELKINDS AND ROSCH, 1990)

- Redesign the task
- Redesign the work environment
- Establish flexible work schedule
- Encourage participative management
- Include the employee in career development
- Analyze work roles and establish goals
- Provide social support and feedback
- Build cohesive team
- Share the rewards

INDIVIDUAL STRATEGY

- SOCIAL SUPPORT
- HARDINESS
- COPING RESOURCES AND STRATEGY
- PERSONALITY – TYPE A

A Model of Social Support

Social Support: the amount of helpfulness derived from social relationships.

Potential stressful event

Perceived availability of support resources:
- Culture, institutions, companies
- Groups, Individuals

Purpose of support:
- Global or functional

Engage support

Effect of social support on reducing stress and stress outcomes

Support perceived and used but not used
Support not perceived

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