

Faculty of Human and Social Sciences

Department of Psychology

Level: 3rd year LMD work and organization Psychology

Instructor: Ms. Saci Meriem

Module: English

Lesson n°3: The Impact of Work Stress

Introduction

Work stress is one of the most significant challenges in modern organizations. It affects not only employees' psychological and physical well-being but also overall organizational performance.

I. Definition

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020):

“Work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and that challenge their ability to cope.” In simple terms, **work stress occurs when job demands exceed a person's ability to handle them.**

II. Nature of Work Stress

Stress itself is not always negative.

- *Eustress (positive stress)*: motivates employees to achieve goals and meet deadlines.
- *Distress (negative stress)*: occurs when pressure becomes overwhelming, leading to burnout, anxiety, and health problems.

Therefore, it is not stressed itself that is harmful, but its **intensity, duration, and management.**

III. Major Sources of Work Stress.

a. Organizational Stressors

- Excessive workload and unrealistic deadlines.
- Poor physical working conditions (noise, lighting, temperature).
- Organizational change and restructuring.

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- Lack of job security.
- Role ambiguity (unclear job expectations) or role conflict (incompatible demands).

b. Interpersonal Stressors

- Conflicts with supervisors, colleagues, or clients.
- Lack of support or recognition.
- Workplace bullying or harassment.

c. Individual Stressors

- Personality traits (e.g., Type A behavior — competitive, impatient).
- Perfectionism and low stress tolerance.
- Work-life imbalance.

d. Technological and Environmental Stressors

- Constant connectivity (emails, smartphones).
- Rapid technological changes.
- Information overload and digital fatigue.

IV. Theoretical Models of Work Stress

Several models explain how stress develops and affects employees:

a. The Demand-Control Model (Karasek, 1979)

- Stress results from high job demands and low job control.
- Employees in high-demand but low-autonomy jobs (e.g., call centers) experience the greatest strain.

b. The Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (Siegrist, 1996)

- Stress occurs when the effort invested in work is not matched by adequate rewards (salary, recognition, job security).

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c. The Transactional Model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)

- Stress depends on how individuals **appraise** (interpret) and **cope** with stressful situations.
- Two key types of coping:
 - **Problem-focused coping:** tackling the source of stress.
 - **Emotion-focused coping:** managing emotional responses.

V. Symptoms and Consequences of Work Stress

a. Psychological Effects

- Anxiety, irritability, and depression.
- Emotional exhaustion and burnout.
- Low motivation and job dissatisfaction.

b. Physical Effects

- Headaches, fatigue, and sleep disturbances.
- Cardiovascular diseases and high blood pressure.
- Weakened immune system.

c. Behavioral Effects

- Absenteeism and tardiness.
- Increased errors or accidents.
- Substance abuse or unhealthy coping behaviors (overeating, smoking).

d. Organizational Consequences

- Decreased productivity and efficiency.
- High employee turnover and absenteeism.
- Increased healthcare costs.
- Poor morale and damaged organizational climate.

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VI. Measuring Work Stress

Organizations can assess work stress using:

- *Questionnaires* (e.g., Perceived Stress Scale, Job Stress Survey).
- *Interviews and focus groups* to identify stressors.
- *Physiological indicators* (e.g., blood pressure, cortisol levels).

Data gathered helps HR departments develop better stress management strategies.

VII. Coping Strategies and Stress Management

a. Individual Strategies

1. **Time management:** prioritize and plan tasks.
2. **Relaxation techniques:** deep breathing, mindfulness, yoga.
3. **Healthy lifestyle:** regular exercise, balanced diet, adequate sleep.
4. **Social support:** talk with friends, family, or counselors.
5. **Cognitive restructuring:** changing negative thinking patterns.

b. Organizational Strategies

1. **Job redesign:** adjust workload, clarify roles, increase autonomy.
2. **Supportive leadership:** encourage open communication and feedback.
3. **Employee assistance programs (EAPs):** counseling and psychological support.
4. **Training and development:** build coping skills and resilience.
5. **Healthy work culture:** promote fairness, teamwork, and recognition.

8. Modern Work Stress Challenges

- *Remote work stress:* social isolation, blurred work-life boundaries.
- *Techno stress:* anxiety caused by constant digital demands.
- *Performance monitoring:* surveillance and pressure for constant productivity.