ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE STRESS DIMENSION AND COPING STYLES

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1.1 Introduction

Right from the time to birth till the last breath drawn, an individual is invariably exposed to various stressful situations. Different people have different views about it as stress can be experienced from a variety of sources. Ask the opinions of five different people and you are likely to frustration or emotional tension; the air traffic controller sees it as a problem of alertness and concentration; the biochemist thinks of it's a purely chemical event. The concept of stress was first introduced in the life science by Hans Selye in 1936. It is a concept borrowed from the natural sciences. Derived from the Latin word 'Stringere', stress was popularly used in the seventeenth century to mean hardship, strain, adversity or affiliation. It was used in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to denote force, pressure, strain or strong effort with reference to an object or person. In psycho-physiology, stress refers to some stimulus resulting in a detectable strain that cannot be accommodated by the organism and which ultimately results in impaired health or behavior.

Stress is caused by internal or external demands that upset the balance of an individual and affect his/her physical and psychological wellbeing (Lazarus & Cohen, 1977).

Mason (1975) reviewed literature on stress and concluded that there was confusion and a lack of consents regarding its definition. The term stress has been approached in at least four different ways as the stimulus or external force acting on the organism; as the response or changes in the physiological functions; third as the interaction between an external force and the resistance opposed to it, is in biology; and finally, as a comprehensive phenomenon encompassing all the three.

1.1.1 Psychologist Approch – Stress

The Term Stress Is Used to Connote a Variety of Meanings both by the common man and psychologists. Psychologist's different persuasions have given

- Stimulus-oriented,
- Response-oriented (both physiological and behavioral) definitions of the term, and
- Depth psychologists have treated the concept from the etiological and psychodynamic viewpoints. It appears that under these circumstances the essential features of the stress experience have not received the attention they deserve (Asthana, 1983).

1.1.2 Stimulus-Oriented Approach

Stress is regarded as an external force which is perceived as threatening. Some view threat itself as stress. According to Selye (1956), any external event or any internal event any internal drive, which threatens to upset the organism equilibrium, is stress.

1.1.3 Response-Oriented Approach

The nature of stress, it is claimed, can be understood best in terms of the way people perceive and ascribe meaning to stress-producing situations, the values they attribute to actions and the way they interact with events. Stress cognition is conceived as pre-conceptual: it is more adjectival than motivational. Psychiatrists have identified four phase in the reaction to stress-the initial phase of anticipatory threat, the impact of stress, the recoil phase and the post-traumatic phase.

The response-oriented approaches describe how stress is reacted to, and how people function under stress. The biologically-oriented approach to stress is also response-oriented, i.e., it views the reactions of the organism as attempts to come to terms with the environment. This approach considers events (both external and internal) which pose a threat to the integrity of the organism leading to the disorganization of personality as stress. Stress presages loss of ego strength and loss ego support. Stress may be induced by interpersonal (external) or intra psychic (between own impulses and ego) factors resulting in anxiety.

1.2 Stressors Perceived Differently

Stress, in this regard, may be viewed as a stimulus to growth and the achievement of a now balance. Keeping in view that stress is a personal response to certain variations in the environment, it is possible to (Pestonjee, 1987 a) conceive that same set of stressors can be differently perceived depending on

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- the nature and magnitude of the strategy;
- the importance of the stressor to the individual;
- the perception of the threat element as a component of the stressor;
- the personal and social support systems available to the individual; and
- the involvement and willingness on the part of the individual 'to do something' about the state of stress.

One must view the sources of stress in the light of social systems; to which we all belong (Pestonjee, 1987a). There are two such systems; the primary system, such as family and religious, regional and linguistic groups; and the secondary system to which we relate such as neighborhood, schools, colleges, technical institutes and work organizations. As the functional requirements and role expectations from both these systems differ, the demands made on the individual in one system have their efforts on his/her performance in the other. Moreover, resources from one system can also be invested in the other system to take care of the problems arising in it.

1.3 Important Sectors of Life in Which Stress Originates
Important Sectors of life in which Stress originates are:
- Job and the organization,
- The social sector, and
- Intra psychic sector.

The first namely, job and organization refers to the totality the work environment (task, atmosphere, colleagues, compensations, policies, etc). The social sector refers to the social/cultural context of one's life. It may include religion, caste, language, dress and other such factors. The intra psychic sector encompasses those things which are intimate and personal like temperament, values, abilities and health. It is contended that stresses can originate in any of these three sectors on in combinations thereof.

1.4 The concept of role and related concepts
An organization can be defined as a system of roles. However, role itself is a system. Pareek (1983a) has defined role as any position a person holds in a system (organization) as defined by the expectations of various significant persons. including himself / herself have from that position.

The definition of role indicates that there are inherent problems in the performance of a role and, therefore, stress is inevitable. The concept of role and the related concepts of 'role space' and 'role set' have a built-in-potential for conflict and stress (Pareek, 1993). From the point of view of an individual, two role systems are important: role space and role set.
- **Role Space**: Each individual occupies and plays several roles simultaneously. Person 'X' can be a son, a father, an executive, a member of a club and so on, at the same time. All these roles constitute role space. Role space, thus, can be defined as 'the dynamic interrelationship both between the self and the various roles an individual occupies, and amongst these roles'.
- **Role Set:** The individual's role in the organization is defined by the expectation of other significant roles, and those of the individual himself/herself. The role set is 'the pattern of relationship between the role being considered and other roles'.

1.4.1 Dimensions of organizational role stress and dysfunctional coping strategies
- **Role Elimination:** When the role occupant experience the inter role distance they accept one role at the cost of another. By doing full justice to one role (May be family role) and try to accommodate organizational role and accept that stressor are in evitable. Another way to overcome the stress caused by inter role distance is role partitioning by means of which they clearly demark between organizational and non-organizational roles.
- **Role Fixation:** When promotion are given without adequate grooming of role occupant they keep stagnating (Role stagnant) in their older role by playing their older roles and neglect higher roles.
- **Role Shrinkage:** When there is Role Expectation conflict the role occupant try to eliminate some functions or hide the problems due to conflict or incompetence
- **Role Visibility:** When Role Erosion is experienced by the incumbents they press for their rights and seek for structural clarification, they do not address the basic conflict giving rise to Role Erosion.
- **Role Reduction:** When there is Role over load situation they set priorities. They do easier and faster task and set lowest performance to difficult or time consuming tasks even though it may be important.

- **Role Boundness:** When there is Role Isolation they accept the problem and confine themselves to limited functions which do not need much interaction with others.
- **Role Rejection or Self Rejection:** On experiencing the Self Role Distance they reject the concept of self and reduce the individual effectiveness. They play their role for the sake of livelihood in a routine manner.
- **Role Prescription:** Where there is Role Ambiguity they demand for written prescription (or) job descriptions to clarify the role expectations, if not they try to fit into their role depending on his own role expectations. (Role Taking)
- **Role Atrophy:** When the role cannot be played fully due to Resource inadequacy situation they bear the situation and perform to the lesser extent as possible.

1.5 Functional Coping Strategies

Role Negotiation: When Inter Role Distance id felt mutuality of the role is established. Organization helps the role occupant to play the role effectively by offering flexi-time.

Role Transition: Where there is Role stagnation the role occupant may be helped to take up newer role through imparting needed skills and by providing supported needed during the initial period.

Role Linkage: When there is Role Expectation conflict it is minimized through compromising or establishing proper and good linkages with the concerned role or with poorly interacting roles.

Role Enrichment: Role Erosion can be minimized through the following process

- Role Analysis
- Role Development
- Role Re-designing

So that role occupant will appreciate the strength and challenges.

Role Slimmings: Without losing the vital function some functions are taken out and delegated to others.

1.6 Conclusion

Managing stress also differs from person to person. There is no absolute right way to manage stress. Our goal is not to eliminate stress, but learn how to manage it and how to use it to help us. The best approach is to assess the specific situation, alter the method and fit it to that particular situation and then monitor its effectiveness. The major goal of managing stress is simply to enable the individual to function at his or her optimal level in healthy and positive manner. Balance is a key concept misconception among both the therapist and the client is that the goal of stress management is to minimize or eliminate stress. Although this may be appropriate in some instances, a more general concern is that of achieving the proper balance of stress. One must balance the individual personal resources against the demands made upon him or her.

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