

# Case study: stress



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Hans Selye view in 1956 about the stress was “ stress isn’t necessarily something bad – it all depends on how you take it. The stress of exhilarating, creative successful work is beneficial, while that of failure, humiliation or infection is detrimental.” (Sanvee, Stress (Pressure Tension), 2009)

“ In the words of Richard S Lazarus, basically stress is a feeling that is experienced when a person started thinking that the demands exceeds the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.”  
(FatFreeKitchen)

“ Stress refers to the strain that is resulted from the conflict between our external environment and us, leading to emotional and physical pressure. In our hasty paced world, it is really impossible to live without the stress, whether you are a student or a working adult, you might affected by it at any stage of life. There is both positive and negative stress; basically it is depending on each individual’s unique perception between the two forces.”  
(What is Stress?, 2011)

“ Not all stress is bad. For example, positive stress, also known as eustress, can help an individual to function at best possible effectiveness and competence. So, it is obvious that some form of eustress can add more color and enthusiasm to our lives. For example, The existence of a deadline can push us to produce greater efficiency. Hence, It is very important to keep this in mind, that stress management refers using stress to our benefits, and not on eradicating the presence of stress in one’s life. On the other side, negative stress i. e. distress can result in mental and physical strain as well. The individual who is suffering with stress will experience symptoms such as

tensions, bad temper, headaches, irritability and in extreme cases, heart palpitations. So it is important to manage stress levels so that it does not have an unfavorable impact on your health and relationships.” (What is Stress?, 2011)

## **Figure 2. 1 Optimum Level of Stress**

Figure 2. 1 shows the optimum and desirable level that is needed to be achieved in order to give good performance.

“ Stress is defined as a unclear response of the body to a stimulus or event” (Kavanagh, 2005). “ In English, stress is defined as the strain or anguish resulting from difficult situations” (Alves et al., 2004). “ Stress refers to workers not being able to adapt to work and, therefore, involves some biological and psychological reaction” (Hsieh, Huang & Su 2004). “ Stress on family life may take place from both the schedule and the content of work” (MacDermid et al., 1994) while White, Wilson & Pfoutz, (2006) consider it unavoidable. It affects negatively the individual and organization both. (Sarooj Noor, 2008)

## **Physical reactions to stress**

Stress affects the physical and mental health of an individual. “ The Generalized Stress Response is the phrase used to explain a variety of physical reactions to stress, such as:”

“ An increased metabolism, for example, faster heartbeat and quicker breathing.”

“ Increased blood pressure.”

“ Increased cholesterol and fatty acids in the bloodstream.”

“ Decreased protein synthesis, impaired digestion and immune and allergic response systems.”

“ Faster blood clotting.”

“ Increased production of stomach acids.”

“ Increased production of blood sugar for energy.”

“ Localized inflammation (for example, swelling and pain in joints, muscles, and skin).”

“ Widened airways directing more oxygen into the muscles.”

“ Tensed up muscles.”

“ Increased sweating to cool muscles”

(Enough Workplace stress, 2003)

## **Figure 2. 2 Generalized Stress Response**

Figure 2. 2 shows the stress response on human being as discussed in the sub unit of physical response of stress.

## **Work Stress**

“ Work-related stress occurs when one’s job demands are incompatible or mismatched with the mental regulation processes, such as information processing, planning, and movement execution. (Greiner, 1998)”

In the words of Westman “ Job stress arises when demand of job exceed abilities, while job-related strains are responses or outcomes resulting from the experience of stress.” (Westman, 2005)

From McGraw-Hill Science & Technology Dictionary work stress mean Any external force that acts on the body of a worker during the performance of a task. (Work stress)

These are the different type of deffinitions given by different scholors. The main focuss of these and many other deffinations is just mismatch of one item i. e. demand with other item i. e. abilities.

### **The Work Stress effects on individuals**

According to the Health and Safety Executive, “ prolonged work-related stress can lead to: poor mental health; heart disease; back pains, gastrointestinal disturbances and miscellaneous minor illnesses including trouble with gums or mouth and toothache, shortness of breath, dizziness, earache, swollen ankles, rashes or itches and headaches; and an increase in unhelpful health behavior such as missing breakfast, drinking too much alcohol and smoking.” (Stress survey, 2001)

Work-related stress is nowadays the second most important work-related health problem in the UK. According to Stress survey 2001 the main or important causes of work stress with their percentages are as

### **Figure 2. 3 Effects of stress**

These are the effects of stress on individuals in a European society. (Stress survey, 2001)

## **Work Stress Causes**

“ Stress can be resulted from numerous reasons, from too much work to bullying or violence. Bad management and excessive workloads came out clearly as the top two problems leading to stress in their workplaces.

According to Stress survey 2001 the main or important causes of work stress with their percentages are as.” (Stress survey, 2001)

## **Figure 2. 4 Causes Of Stress**

### **Stress in Today’s Workplace**

A common issue which has been raised in many nations is “ Working style is changing at a very fast speed from what it was to what it is. So work stress resulted in giving a bad impression on the health of the individuals, their families health and even on the health of Organizations for whom they are working.” (Stress At Work, 2010)

## **Figure 2. 5 What Workers say about stress on job**

According to this report workers at different places do report that they have to face stress and do report that their job is extremely stressful. (Stress At Work, 2010)

According to different researches, “ Job stress has become a common and costly problem in the American workplace, leaving few workers unaffected. For example, studies report the following:”

“ Almost one-fourth of employees in different organizations view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives.”

-Northwestern National Life

“ Almost three-fourths of employees in different organizations believe they have more on-the-job stress than a generation ago.”

-Princeton Survey Research Associates

Luckily, work stress researches have extended in the current years. But putting aside all this awareness, uncertainty remains about the work stress causes & work stress effects. (Stress At Work, 2010)

## **Approaches towards job stress**

There are different approaches towards job stress lets see them one by one.

### **NIOSH Approach**

“ NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) on the basis of their experience and research favors the point of view that working conditions play a primary role in causing job stress. According to the point of view of NIOSH, contact to stressful working situations or conditions (called job stressors) can have a direct effect on worker safety and health. But as shown below, the NIOSH Model of job stress shows, individual and other situational factors can mediate to strengthen or weaken this effect.

Examples of individual and situational factors that can help to diminish the effects of stressful working conditions include these” (group)

“ Balance between work and family or personal life”

“ A support network of friends and coworkers”

“ A relaxed and positive outlook” (group)

## **NIOSH Model**

### **Figure 2. 6 NIOSH Model of Job Stress**

Almost everyone agrees that job stress is the outcome of the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. Views differ; however, no one can't deny the importance of worker characteristics versus working conditions as the most important cause of job stress. These differing perspectives are vital because they suggest different ways to prevent stress at work. According to one school of thought, diversity in individual characteristics traits such as personality and coping style are most important in predicting result in stress. Or in other words, what is stressful for one human being may not be a problem for someone else. This viewpoint leads to prevention strategies that focus on human resources and ways to help them deal with challenging job conditions. (group)

## **A MODEL ON WORK STRESS**

“ The stress process can be summed up in a model which is presented by world Health Organization; this model demonstrate the causes of stress, stress reactions, long-term consequences or results of the stress and individual characteristics, as well as their interrelations.” (Irene Houtman, 2005)

### **Figure 2. 7 Model of Work Stress**

“ Stress reactions may result when people are exposed to risk factors at work. Reactions may be emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and/or physiological in nature. When stress reactions persist over a longer period of time, they may expand into more everlasting, irretrievable health outcomes,



such as chronic fatigue, musculoskeletal problems or cardiovascular disease.” (Irene Houtman, 2005)

## **Work-life balance**

“ Work-life balance is the term used to refer to policies that strive to attain a greater complementarily and balance between work and home responsibilities.” (Jennifer Redmond)

“ The concept that simultaneously engaging in multiple work and family roles is valuable for the physical, mental, and relationship health of individuals.” (Greenhaus, 2003)

“ The extent to which the individuals are equally involved in-and equally contented with-their work role and their family role.” (Greenhaus & Singh, 2003)

“ Work/Life Balance is a state of equilibrium in which the demands of a person’s job and personal life are equally balanced.” (Lockwood, 2003)

“ Working practice that acknowledges and intended to support the needs of employees in achieving a balance between their homes and working lives” is given by HEBS in 2002. (Work-life Balance)

Further work life is explained as “ Work-life is the practice of providing initiatives designed to create a more flexible, supportive work environment, enabling employees to focus on work tasks while at work. It includes making the culture more supportive, adding programs to meet life event needs, ensuring that policies give employees as much control as possible over their

lives, and using flexible work practices as a strategy to meet the dual agenda—the needs of both business and employees” (Work-Life)

Work/life balance if one talks in a broader sense means “ a satisfactory level of association or a ‘ fit’ between the manifold roles in an individual’s life. Although definitions and explanations vary a lot, work/life balance is generally associated with equilibrium, or maintaining an overall sense of synchronization in life. The study of work/life balance involves the assessment of people’s ability to manage concurrently the multi-faceted demands of life.” (Hudson)

“ Work-life balance has always been a reason of anxiety for all those who are interested in knowing about the quality of working life and its extension to different parts of life. In the early days of the industrial revolution in Europe a major issue was child labor. In times of recession the highlighted issue is the lack of employment and its consequences, Yet work-life balance appeared in the contemporary debates largely because in affluent societies the excessive demands of work are perceived to present a distinctive issue that needs to be addressed.” (Guest, 2001)

“ To get good stability between their work responsibilities and their family obligations is a growing concern for contemporary employees and organizations. There is now mounting evidence connecting work-life imbalance to reduced health and wellbeing among individuals and their families as well.” (Thomas Kalliath, 2008)

When I was surfing the net I found information, “ based on a survey of 1, 027 employees in Hong Kong, and it reveals that the general improvement in  
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work-life balance of Hong Kong employees compared with their same study done in 2004. Results of a questionnaire-based survey distributed in the Hong Kong employers showed the following results as” (Welford, 2008)

“ Many more companies are now allowing some kind of flexible working as compared with 2004.” (Welford, 2008)

“ The average working week is 49. 6 hours (in 2004 it was 55. 2).” (Welford, 2008)

“ Employees’ health is being affected as 82. 5% of people said they suffered stress and 75. 4% from lack of exercise.” (Welford, 2008)

“ 46. 4% report poor diet and 45. 6% exhaustion resulting from their job stress.” (Welford, 2008)

“ Employees are taking sick leave as 27% of people take sick leave in order to recover from working long hours.” (Welford, 2008)

“ Work-life balance is being affected as.” (Welford, 2008)

“ Most people think they have too much work to do, which detracts from their work-life balance.” (Welford, 2008)

“ Most people are unhappy about the amount of time they spend with their family and friends.” (Welford, 2008)

So from this survey result one can say work stress can create many problems to the individuals who is being affected and indirectly it can cause family imbalance. In other countries they are using a terminology work-like

balance to highlight the same issue as I am trying to highlight, but I have changed it according to our culture.

The reason behind work stress is mostly work pressure as Anilkumar C. S & Sandeep K. Krishnan were of the view that “ If you were a traditional employee then the work will naturally begins and ends during the office hours. But the new age knowledge work demands stretch of work away from the normal office hours. Putting aside the normal issues which are related to work overload, David Posen recommended that external demands from bosses/clients/coworkers, corporate culture, deadlines, internal drive to do more and fear of negative effects like bad performance review demands employees to do more than what is normally expected.” (Anilkumar C. S, 2005)

So one thing is clear because of work pressure and the issue as highlighted by Anilkumar C. S & Sandeep K. Krishnan in their report has opened a way to penetrate into the reasons of work stress.

Further Michael R. Frone in his report has shown the two different roles of same individual in context to the European culture

## **Figure 2. 8 Role of Individual**

Figure 2. 1 shows Work and non work social roles. According to Frone “ The term non work isn’t meant to imply that the social roles such as parent or student do not involve in work activities. In an effort to avoid this problem, some researchers refer to “ work” and “ life” roles, but this creates the opposite problem in that the distinction which means that work is not a life

role. So he said “ It would be more precise to label the two broad life domains employment and no employment”. (Frone, 2005)

So if both working life roles and family roles are not moving in well direction then naturally a haphazard can result. And this doesn't mean that we can achieve good family balance if we work less. According to Balance your life and work Book, “ Work-life balance is sometimes puzzled with finding means to work less or to work flexibly, because for some people these are the most important elements of a good balance. But talking on a broad-spectrum, work-life balance is a feeling of being in control of your life, being able to exercise choice, and about finding equilibrium between your own needs and needs of others as well, whether it is at work or at home.” (Collectif, 2005)

## **Work Life Balance Models**

**According to David E Guest “ Zedeck and Mosier (1990) and more recently O’Driscoll (1996) note that there are typically five main models used to explain the relationship between work and life outside work.” (Guest, 2001)**

### **Segmentation Model**

“ The segmentation model theorizes that work and non-work are two diverse domains of life that are quite different and have no influence on each other. This appears to be offered as a theoretical possibility rather than a model with empirical support.” (Guest, 2001)

### **Spillover Model**

“ A spillover model hypothesizes that one world can manipulate the other in any way i. e. either a positive or negative way. There is an abundant research to support this but as a proposition it is specified in such a general

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way as to have little value. Therefore, we needed a more detailed proposition about the nature, grounds and consequences of spillover.”(Guest, 2001)

### **Compensation Model**

“ The third model is a compensation model which states that what may be lacking in one area, in expressions of demands or satisfactions can be made up in the other. For example work may be schedule and unchallenging but this is compensated for by a prime role in local community activities outside the work.” (Guest, 2001)

### **Instrumental Model**

“ A fourth model is an instrumental model whereby actions in one area facilitate success in the other. The conventional example is the instrumental worker who will look for maximizing his earnings, and will work for long hours on a routine job, so that they can purchase a home or a car for their family.” (Guest, 2001)

### **Conflict Model**

“ The final model is a conflict model which recommended that with soaring levels of demand in all field of life, some difficult decision have to be made which may result in some conflicts and probably some significant burden on an individual may occur.” (Guest, 2001)

“ Recently attention has diverted towards a particular model i. e. the conflict model. The five models listed above are basically descriptive models. To be of great value they need to integrate an analysis of their causes and consequences. One recent approach that might help to enlighten this is what <https://assignbuster.com/case-study-stress/>

known as border theory. (Clark, 2000). It states that people are in fact daily border-crossers as they move between home and work. This opens up a rich vein of analysis of the nature of borders, their permeability, and the ease with which they can be managed or moved and so on". (Guest, 2001)

## **A BRIEF HISTORY-Work/life Balance**

" The phrase was first used in the late 1970s to portray the balance between an individual's work and personal life. In the United States, this expression was first used in 1986." (Work-life balance)

" During the 1960s and 1970s, employers considered work-life mostly a concern for working mothers who fight with the demands of their jobs and bringing up their children. Throughout this phase and into the mid-1980s, the U. S. government had the major impact in the field, as showed by the Presidential Conference on Families, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, and the Quality of Employment Survey." (Bird, 2006)

## **Current Views on Work-Life Balance**

According to Kelleen Kaye and David Gray " American families deal with major challenges in balancing work and family life. Workers stated that they would prefer fewer hours, while with the new technological capabilities parents have to bring more job responsibilities home with them. Mothers and fathers come across strain in work and home environments alike. Polling and surveillance data authenticated that the balance between work and family care needs attention." (kelleen kaye, 2007)

Further they added " The labor supply of parents has enlarged radically over the last generation. In 1970, approximately two-thirds of married couples

had one spouse at home to handle their family needs; by 2006, 61% of married couples with children under the age of 18 had both parents working outside the home, further the parents are working longer hours. Work hours for both parents have increased by about one to three hours per week between the mid-1970s and the early years of this decade. As an outcome, total time spend on the job for the average family has increased by about 12 hours per week during approximately the same time. By 2002, dual-earner couples with children spent about 91 hours a week in rewarded and unrewarded work.” (kelleen kaye, 2007)