

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The researcher studied the relevant literature in order to gain more knowledge from an overview of stress in general which includes its definition, effects, occupational stressors and its effects. Also related research is mentioned in this chapter.

2.1 STRESS

2.1.1 Definition of stress

In our contemporary society, we are surrounded by many circumstances that create various forms of stress. The word “stress” is originally from the Latin word “stringere”. The concept of how stress affects individuals was influenced by the definitions of strain and load used in physics and engineering (Arnold, Silvester, Patterson, Robertson, Cooper, and Burnes, 2005). Stress can be created by many circumstances in our lives. It is presented in many forms: large and small, pretty and ugly, simple and complex (Weiten & Lloyd, 1994). However, it is very difficult for social scientists to precisely define and measure stress (Riggio & Porter, 2009).

Stress occurs when “there are demands on the person which tax or exceed his adjustive resources” (Lazarus, 1976). According to Hans Selye, stress is a general adaptation syndrome (swelling of the adrenal cortex, atrophy of the thymus, gastric and duodenal ulcers) which is a set of common responses to any kinds of certain demands or conditions named stressors; for example, heat, marriage and anger. Stress can be either favorable or destructive to a person. A positive stress caused by healthy events which gets us going better and stronger, for example, getting promotion, moving to a nicer place and marriage, is called eustress. In contrast, a bad stress caused by unhealthy incidents, for example, losing a beloved, accidents and illness, is named distress (Wikipedia, 2009, work on stress section, para. 3).

Riggio and Porter (2009) also added that stress is an individual’s perceptual process. One will react physically and/or psychologically to an event that is perceived to be threatening or taxing. For example, a simple and boring routine for

one person might be very stressful for another. One survey showed that having to complete paper work made many policemen stressed more than the dangers related to working against criminals did (“Job stress”, 2009, Stress due to job insecurity has skyrocketed section, para. 8)

Also, stress involves situations in which our adaptive mechanism is overtaxed (Farmer, Monahan, & Hekeler, 1984). Therefore, one needs to use the adaptive resource to cope with the stress in order to maintain or get back to his/ her normal state again. For example, while having a big problem with work, a person may like to go to sleep; others may choose to listen to music to make themselves relieved and then recover to their usual condition.

In conclusion, the researcher defines stress as any feeling that positively or negatively affects the normal physical and/or psychological condition of a person and therefore needs a certain amount of physical or mental adaptation to cope with. This study will focus only on “distress”, which requires an individual to adapt himself or herself to avoid overwhelming bad effects.

2.1.2 Effects of stress

Since stress deals with individual perception, stress affects people in different ways. People’s reactions towards stress can be grouped into 3 categories: emotional, physiological and behavioral responses or symptoms (Ross & Altmaier, 1994).

- Emotional responses: Emotion is a powerful and mostly uncontrollable feeling which can be observed by others only when it is expressed through the person’s physical and/or behavioral responses. Weiten and Lloyd (1994) stated that examples of negative emotional responses were anger, annoyance, anxiety and dejection.

- Physiological responses: While people are under stress, the body must work harder to maintain its balance. Farmer, Monahan, and Hekeler (1984) pointed out that the hypothalamus released hormones that stimulated the autonomic nervous system, which in turn altered the normal or “resting” levels of various bodily processes. The physical effects vary in a wide range from headaches to migraine and high blood pressure to heart attack. Ross and Altmier found that cardio-vascular

disease is one of the most common physical symptoms caused by “Stress and the impact,” (1994, p. 12 - 13). Table 1 presents the both physical and behavioral symptoms of stress as well as the ailments with stress etiology.

Table 1. Physical and behavioral symptoms of stress

Physical symptoms	Behavioral symptoms	Ailments with stress etiology
-Lack of appetite	-Constant irritability with people	-Hypertension: high blood pressure
-Craving for food when under pressure	-Feeling unable to cope	-Coronary thrombosis: heart attack
-Frequent indigestion or heartburn	-Lack of interest in life	-Migraine
-Constipation or diarrhea	-Constant or recurrent fear of disease	-Hayfever and allergies
-Insomnia	-A feeling of being a failure	-Asthma
-Constant tiredness	-A feeling of being bad or of self-hatred	-Pruritus: intense itching
-Tendency to sweat for no good reason	-Difficulty in making decisions	-Peptic ulcer
-Nervous twitches	-A feeling of ugliness	-Constipation
-Nail-biting	-Loss of interest in other people	-Colitis
-Headaches	-Awareness of suppressed anger	-Rheumatoid arthritis
-Cramps and muscle spasms	-Inability to show true feelings	-Menstrual difficulties
-Nausea	-A feeling if being the target of other people’s animosity	-Nervous dyspepsia: flatulence and indigestion
-Breathlessness without exertion	-Loss of sense of humor	-Hyperthyroidism: overactive thyroid gland
-Fainting spells	-Feeling of neglect	-Diabetes mellitus
-Frequent crying or desire to cry	-Dread of the future	-Skin disorders
-Impotency or frigidity	-A feeling of having failed as a person or parent	-Tuberculosis
-Inability to sit still without fidgeting	-A feeling of having no one to confide in	-Depression
-High blood pressure	-Difficulty in concentrating	
	-The inability to finish one task before rushing on to the next	
	-An intense fear of open or enclosed spaces, or of being alone	

Note. From *Work Psychology: Understanding Human Behaviour in the Workplace* (4th ed., p. 392), by J. Arnold, J. Silvester, F. Patterson, I. Robertson, C. Cooper, and B. Burnes, 2005. Harlow, England: Prentice Hall/Financial Times.

- Behavioral responses: These responses are the specific actions that a person takes to actively attempt to control, reduce or tolerate his stress. It is recommended to use healthy coping strategies such as exercise, meditation or talking with friends or family to manage stress. However, many people use unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, comfort eating, poor diet choices, and drinking alcohol to “entertain” themselves (APA help center, 2009).

2.2 OCCUPATIONAL STRESS

2.2.1 Definition and source of occupational stress

Nowadays, many theorists consider that the workplace is the primary source of people’s stress. In the United States of America, a report of National Institution for Occupational Safety and Health or NIOSH shows that 40% of workers viewed their jobs were very or extremely stressful and 25% of them considered their jobs as the most significant stressor in their lives (Sauter et al., 2008). In UK, it is likely that stress is the most dangerous risk to business in the early 21st century. It is also reported that 20% of workers or 5 million people in the UK are feeling extremely stressed at work (Tehrani & Ayling, 2008).

In 1994, Ross and Altmaier stated that occupational stress is the interaction of work conditions with characteristics of the worker that requires excessive ability of the worker to cope with those conditions. The occupational stress is defined more comprehensively as it is activated when something or someone disturbs the division of attention required for the work that we have to do and significantly diminishes control our work, and, therefore, over our life (Schabracq, Cooper, Travers, & Maanen, 2001). The research defines that occupational stress, basically, is stress caused by work and has effects on work. It occurs when a worker’s skill does not fit with the requirements of the job and the workplace.

Sources of occupational stress or occupational stressors are those sources that deal with our work or career, for example, our feeling and experiences in our jobs, the challenges in work and location or surroundings of the workplace. It can be divided into various categories. Fundamentally, different researchers and psychologists have shared at least three categories of stress in their studies, which are role characteristics, job characteristics and interpersonal relationships. Other

categories have been added according to the focus and priority set by the individual researchers. For example, in 1994, Ross and Altmaier additionally paid attention to organizational structure and climate; human resource management practices; and physical qualities and technology. NIOSH, however, covered another additional 3 categories, namely management style, career concerns and environmental conditions (Sauter et al., 2008).

Much research in the field of occupational stress, though, introduces 6 major occupational stressors (Cooper & Marshall, 1978).

- Factors intrinsic to the job such as poor working conditions, long and/or irregular hours, shift work, travel, risk and danger, new technology and workload
- Role in the organization: individuals' role ambiguity, role conflict and responsibility
- Relationship at work: relationship with bosses/ commanders, colleagues, subordinates and others whom you have to deal with at work
- Career development: job security and status incongruity
- Organizational structure and climate: sense of belonging, participation in workplace, structure of the organization, management style and policy the employers/ commander, incentive and morale in work
- Non-work factors: family problems, life crisis, financial difficulties

Although the non-work factors can also cause stress at workplace, this research was based only on 5 stressors which are work-related stressors in order to make sure that the research is fully beneficial for the psychological officers. These factors are intrinsic to the job, role in the organization, relationship at work, career development, organizational structure and climate.

2.2.2 Effects of occupational stress

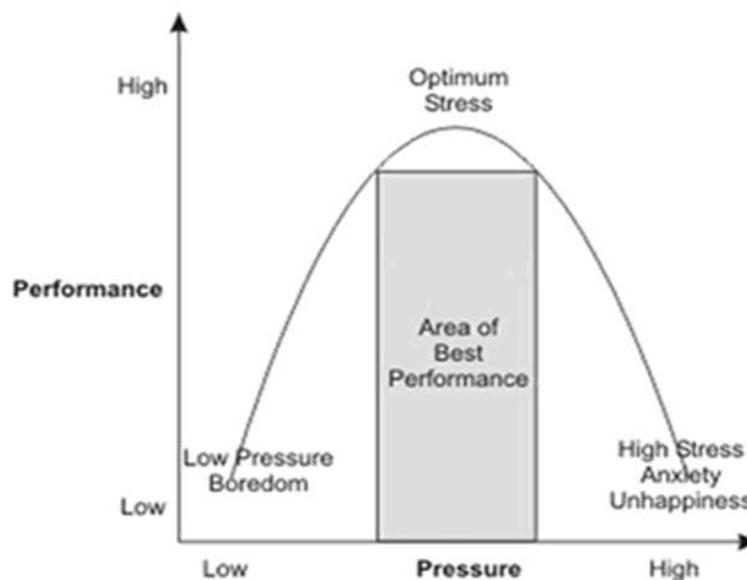
In 1994, Ross and Altmaier presented that like non-work related stressors, occupational stress causes three categories of effect: psychological, physical health, and behavioral effects. Weiten and Lloyd (1994) added that stressed workers also can suffer from burnout which is a process of becoming exhausted, having negative attitudes towards work and being less committed to their jobs.

In 2009, Riggio and Porter pointed out that more than one-half of all physical illnesses are believed to be related to stress, which is partly caused by work. Cardio-vascular disease is one of the most common physical health symptoms of occupational stress. Moreover, in 1994, Ross and Altmaier found that occupational stress has a link related to gastro-intestinal conditions such as ulcers, allergies, skin disease, sleep disturbances, headaches and respiratory diseases.

Stress effects, specifically in behavioral symptoms, do not only have impacts on individual level, but also at organizational level. Arnold et al. (2005) pointed out the United Kingdom has lost almost 10 per cent of its Gross National Product every year because of factors caused by occupational stress; sickness absence, employee turnover, decrease of productivity and medical expenses.

The relationship between pressure that may cause stress and work performance can be presented in an inverted U as shown in figure 1 below. A person has the best performance when he or she is under a certain level of pressure. However, the level of performance becomes lower when the pressure is either lower or higher than the proper level.

Figure 1. Inverted-U relationship between pressure and performance.



Note: *Inverted-U relationship between pressure and performance. Retrieved November 9, 2007, from <http://www.mindtools.com/stress/UnderstandStress/StressPerformance.htm>*

2.3 RELATED RESEARCH

2.3.1 The study of นิตย์ ทองเพชรศรี, สุรพันธ์ ปรามภวี, และสุริ ชาติระรัตน (2548)

The study of civilians in the 4 southern border provinces, namely Songkla, Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat provinces aimed to find out the stress level and the need for mental health promotion related to the insurgency. It showed that 58.97% of the respondents lived under stress and 28.84% of them faced severe levels of stress. About 89.93% of them stated that their stress was caused by insurgency in their area and concern about their lives and assets.

2.3.2 The study of วัฒนะ พรหมเพชร (2549)

Objectives of this research were to study the mental health of the 685 teachers who were in a common group of insurgent targets in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat. According to the research, the psychological condition of 26.04% of the teachers or about one fourth of them is worse than that of average people. Moreover, 95.93% of them stated that they had been affected by insurgency in their area and 18.83% of them were at risk of committing suicide (สำนักงานกองทุนสนับสนุนการสร้างเสริมสุขภาพ, 2551).

2.3.3 The study of United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Thailand (2008)

This research aimed to study perceptions of the violence amongst 2,357 Muslim and Buddhist children living in the deep South and 283 children living in central Thailand. The study revealed that there was 42% of the children stating that they liked soldiers. In addition, 55% of the southern children stated that they had good things to say about soldiers. However, both soldiers and police were feared because the children perceived that “where there are soldiers, there can be violence”.

2.3.4 The study of บัญญัติ ฝั่งยวน และเสกสิทธิ์ ปรากฏชื่อ (2548)

The study focused on the relationship between occupational and individual stress and the intention of the Pattani Provincial Police Officers to move

out of the three southern border provinces. It was found that, overall, the organizational structure and climate was the most significant job stressor that affected the intention of the police officers in Pattani province to move to work in other areas. The other four stressors were prioritized as organization role, career improvement, work conditions and work relations.

Based on the related studies, most of the civilians living in the southern border provinces found their stress was caused by insurgency in the area. Almost all of the teachers in the area who were asked to fill out the questionnaire stated that they were affected by insurgency. In the deep South, although most children had good attitudes toward the soldiers, they feared the soldiers because they think the soldiers are the target of the violence. While insurgency is obviously a serious concern for people in general, the organizational structure and climate is the most important job stressor that made the police officers in Pattani want to move out of the area.

This researcher studied the overall related-literature about stress in general, occupational stress and its effects. The obtained information, as well as related research, stimulated the researcher to study more on the occupational stressors specifically of psychological officers in order to find out which occupational stressor is the most significant one. The next chapter will present the methodology of this research in terms of questionnaire development and method of data collection.