

1

Stress—Reasons & Solutions

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With the advancement of science and technology, urbanization and industrialization, stress is fast spreading among students. Different reports on youth and schooling list several dimensions of stresses of students. This reality cannot be neglected because the wear and tear caused by a stressful experience “can never be restored even with rest” (Selye, 1956). A closer examination of the far reaching effects of stress can make one feel the harm inherent in the phenomenon of stress. All the effects of stress on cognitive functioning can bestow a person with no good a personality make-up. Vinokur and Selzer (1975) reported that due to living under threatening circumstances, a personality change takes place marked by phobias, intrusive memories and nightmares. Working under conflict and threat triggers psychosis and psychoneurosis of different kinds. The phenomenon of stress has been found to disrupt emotional balance, too. Some psychologists are of the notion that all diseases are related to emotional stress. Although that may not be true, yet in many experimental studies, it has been shown that stress causes high blood pressure, peptic ulcer, disturbance in thyroid gland and respiratory system, steroid and biochemical disturbance, and many types of physical illness. Due to the negative effect of stress on mind and body, individual becomes unable to show performance of the level permitted by his aptitude and capabilities. All these effects of stress mingled together do not allow a person to behave in a normal way in the society. Therefore individuals under stress have been found lacking in proper social behaviour and adjustment. Above all this, when a person tries to cope with stress, the very process drains the body’s energy out. Thus, the foregoing discussion and citation of studies indicate that stress in the phenomenon which works more as a negative factor in the mental, physical, emotional, and social development. Education aims at bringing out the best in the student by his or her all-round development of personality. This obviously includes the mental, physical, emotional and social development.

Introduction

With the advancement of science and technology, urbanization and industrialization, stress is fast spreading among students. Different reports on youth and schooling list several dimensions of stresses of students. This reality cannot be neglected because the wear and tear caused by a stressful experience “can never be restored even with rest”, effects of stress can make one feel the harm inherent in the phenomenon of stress.

The word stress is a term of latin derivation which was first used in the fifteenth century as a shortened or apathetic form of ‘distress’ [Rees, 1976] to denote obnoxious human experience. Shorter oxford english dictionary informs that in 17th century ‘ stress meant hardship, traits,

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adversity or affliction. Stress involves a transaction or commerce between the individual and the environment with which one interacts and organize as distressing to one's well-being.

As a psychological phenomenon stress can be viewed as the state of an organism in any situation where he perceives that his well-being is endangered, and he must devote all of his energies to its protection. Together social and psychological factors in human stress meet the conceptual requirements of stress as generic term despite this agreement about its precise definition among the schools.

Stress is a fact and part of life. It is all around us- at work, in our environment and in our personal lives. Stress has become an inevitable companion today in all fields of life whether a person is an office goer getting late for office or over burdened teacher or student or overworked housewife or a farmer tilling the field under hot sun or a soldier standing guard on snow etc. It's management and coping has become a great concern for physiologists, psychologists, psychiatrists or clinicians.

Definitions

Stress is defined as the psychological upset or disequilibrium in human beings caused by frustrations, conflicts and other internal as well as external strains and pressures. In the second sense, stress is regarded as a class of stimuli which threat an individual in some way and thus cause disturbances in his behaviour.

Thus stresses are the factors or causes that lead to maladjustments and disorganization of the behaviour. Stress as a word means "to draw tight" and has been used to describe hardship, affliction, force, strain or strong effort. It has been recognized as an external load or pressure supplied on the individual and viewed as person's response to a disturbance.

In other words stress can be both a stimulant to growth and development and a major factor in the etiology of a variety of physical and emotional disorders. It refers to that class of stimuli which are more likely to produce anxiety, a conscious and reportable experience of intense dread and foreboding.

But in further investigation it was concluded that stress can't be defined in terms of stimulus and responses alone. It is a 'relational concept' that is, a balance between demands and the power to deal with them. It refers to demands that tax or exceeds available resources [internal and external] as cognitively appraised by the person involved.

There are two dimensions of stress:

1. **Positive Dimension-** The positive dimension of stress is called eustress. For example an artist is trying to make best piece of his life is under some sort of stress but the outcome is creativity. So eustress leads to productivity.
2. **Negative Dimension-** If stress is of very severe nature, lasting longer and may threaten to damage the organism, it may result in a negative dimension of stress. It leads to deterioration in performance.

Reasons of Stress

[1] Stress as a state of psychological upset:

1. **Frustrations-** A wide range of environmental obstacles, both physical and social and

the internal factors in the form of personal limitation, biological conditions and psychological barriers may lead to frustration of our needs, motives and efforts.

2. **Conflicts-** Conflicts of motives and desires may also cause frustrating and stress situations. Such conflicting situation may lead to tensions and inner turmoil that the individual cannot resist stress and eventually develops into a disorganized personality.
3. **Pressures-** These also prove a major source of causing stress.
 - **Internal pressures-**These are caused by our own self for maintaining the picture of ourselves-as we think could and should be. We strive hard to reach the top, to achieve success, and in doing so we put an irresponsible pressure on ourselves.
 - **External pressures-**The environmental demands, social obligations, family responsibilities, aspirations of the person who concern us and the problem of complexities of life exert a good deal of pressure. Such pressures force us to strive and struggle resulting in severe stress.

[2] Stress as a class of stimuli:

Stress is also considered as a class of stimuli that affect the individual and bring about stress situations. Every one of us is faced many times each day with minor stress situations : the bus is not available, broken appliances, delays, other people's irritating behaviour often cause some sort of stress and annoyance. Such happenings and results are easily forgotten.

The story does not end with such easily faced or forgotten situations. We are often faced with stress situations of a much more serious nature which have a considerable impact on our physical and mental health. The hazards and calamities of life like

1. Losing a job, money or property.
2. A severe illness.
3. Death of a loved one.
4. Financial liabilities beyond one's income.

Such stresses are capable of bringing about behaviour and personality disorganizations of a serious nature.

Changing Scenario

In earlier centuries people had become victims of biological diseases. For example, people often died at a young age due to disease like diphtheria or typhoid and such other epidemics. Thanks to the developments of medical science as it today keeps alive people much longer and relatively safe from the epidemics that once afflicted mankind. But what we see now is a greater number of deaths from stress related diseases such as heart attacks, bleeding ulcers and high blood pressure. So we can readily say that 20th century is really a century of stress.

Also cancer is one of the most dreaded diseases for many years. Why do people suffer from cancer? What kind of life setting and life circumstances do people who succumb to cancer have? What are the personality characteristics of such people? These are some of the specific issues that the present study is concerned with. Keeping the above facts in consideration this research work attempted to explore the relationship between psychological factors, such as

stress, frustrations, personality traits and cancerogenesis.

Solutions

Good solution should not only result in reduction of tension, but also they should be personality desirable and socially acceptable. For example, if a person embezzles a large sum of money he may be relieved of tension created by financial insecurity but at the time, it created a sense of guilt in the person and his conscience is disturbed, also, created a fear of apprehension. If the selected tension-reducing activity helps the individual to regain his mental equilibrium without unduly altering other motives, lowering his personal efficiency and standards, and without violating social values and customs, the selected tension-reducing activity is said to be favourable and desirable. The favourableness or unfavourableness or desirability or undesirability of a selected tension-reducing activity depends upon the above criteria.

Coping Techniques

[1] Psychological

According to Jacobson common psychological responses to stress include muscle tenseness, a racing pulse, pounding heart, sweating etc.

1. **Relaxation:** Progressive relaxation is the most effective procedure to reduce the tension in our muscles. It can be achieved by alternately flexing and relaxing your muscles to appreciate the difference between relaxed and tense muscles or you might shake your arms and then comes the neck. In this way one can relax his body from head to toe step by step.
2. **Controlled breathing:** When a person is tensed, it is seen that he/she tends to take in relatively short, shallow breaths. However this changes to deeper ones when relaxed.
3. **Meditation:** A relaxed state of mind and body can also be achieved by meditation.

[2] Behavioural

We all are guilty of behaving in ways that bring stress on ourselves.

Aids to behavioural techniques

1. **Self monitor:** Pay attention to the way you are thinking and feeling in a given situation. It is important to learn about what causes stress to prevent a blow up.
2. **Be yourself:** Place your confidence in yourself, not in the role. You'll be more effective acting natural instead fitting in a role.
3. **Be patient:** Be patient with yourself. Do not punish yourself for not achieving perfection. Your mistakes should be learning experiences, rather than times for self criticism.
4. **Have a constructive work:** Try to look for the positives in the people around you. Put yourself in other's shoes and then conclude anything about their behaviour.
5. **Use supportive relationships:** Do not draw into yourself when stressed. Remember that we all "get by with a little help from our friends or relatives."

[3] Cognitive

We do not always have control over all the stressors in our lives. We choose to focus on the

negatives. However we can replace such thoughts with the possibilities of positive ones for a better outcome. This is referred to as cognitive restructuring. It can be achieved by monitoring what we say to ourselves during the period of stress and trying to discover something humorous about the situation. Also cognitive appraisal plays a crucial role in the way we interpret our stressors. They can suggest strategies for dealing with the sources of stress that we might not be able to generate ourselves and can help reduce negative feelings {Costanza, 1988}.

Conclusion

Thus, the study, as discussed in the proceeding pages, leads one to this conclusion that complex construct like stress can be understood with the help of psychological or socio-psychological variables. But the resultant effect of these can hardly be probed efficiently because of the interference of many variables-active and passive. Probably this situation might improve at some stage when the individual and social situation interactional matrix is properly analysed and understood. Till then, a raw quantitative analysis will indicate toward only identification not to generalizations this can frankly be admitted.

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