

**STRESS FACTORS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE WORKPLACE
AND
THEIR EFFECTS ON BEHAVIOUR**

By

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CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE

Due to the nature of the information contained in this research it would be appreciated if the contents remain confidential and not be circulated for a period of five years

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ANaeck', with a horizontal line underneath.

Ashveena Naeck

DECLARATION

This research has not been previously accepted for any degree and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed A. Waack

Date 8th Sept 03

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ABSTRACT

Stress is a condition which causes the body to react in response to a threat or a challenge, and where the outcome is important to the individual. Stress can be both physical and psychological. Physical stress can be the result of having too much to do, and psychological stress can be the result of an emotionally disturbing or devastating event. There are several origins of these causes of stress, and this dissertation has attempted to explore the main and most common ones: the various possible factors (stressors) which can arise from the workplace and factors outside the workplace. Everyone experiences stress differently because of various reasons and reacts differently to stress in face of the same stressor. Stressors produce different stress levels in different people: combined with the external factors of stress (potential stressors) it has been found that how one is affected by that stressor depends on how one perceives this stressor, based on its relative importance to the person and the traits and characteristics of the person e.g. reactions in face of a challenge or threat. As an effect of stress, the one reacts physically, psychologically and behaviourally, and has negative consequences rather than positive consequences, which affect both physical and mental well-being and performance at work. These have serious implications for businesses, especially in this highly competitive and dynamic environment. In a research carried out in, it has been found that there is relatively low incidence of stress in the airline industry in Durban but some recommendations for stress management have been made to bring knowledge about the problem and to be proactive in face of an otherwise increasing problem.

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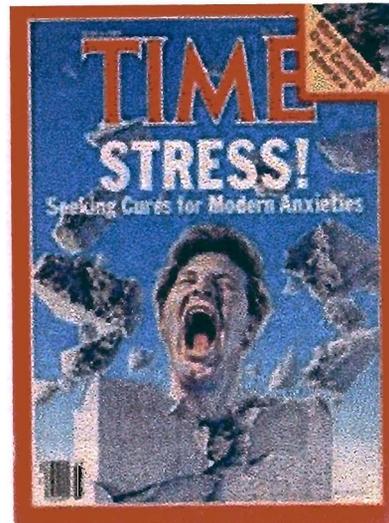
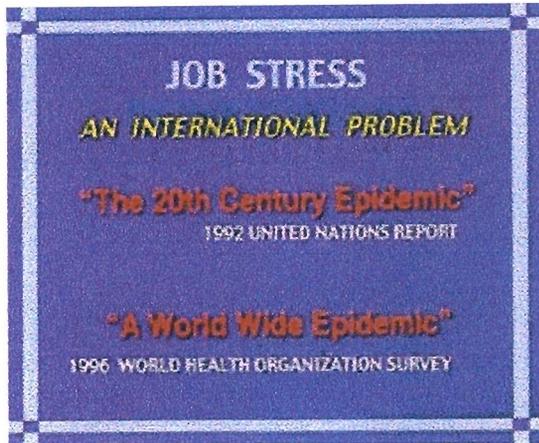
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND



Source: *United Nations Report, 1992, Time Magazine June 6, 1983*
(<http://www.stress.org/>)

A 1992 United Nations Report labelled job stress "The 20th Century Disease" and a few years later the World Health Organization said it had become a "World Wide Epidemic." The *Time* magazine's June 6, 1983 cover story called stress "The Epidemic of the Eighties" and referred to it as our leading health problem. There can be little doubt that the situation has progressively worsened since then, and indeed, to this day, the costs of stress are still present and growing. Various factors are contributing to this: people's own environment, either social or work environment contain stress factors which will affect their behaviour and attitudes. This has an important implication as people are resources to organizations and are vital to companies' competitiveness. Therefore, it is important to study the different factors which can negatively or positively impact on their behaviour – which

will be reflected at the workplace and impact of effectiveness of organisations.

Stress is not a new phenomenon and it has always existed, but it has become a major problem nowadays with various social changes, the changes in lifestyle, work structures and the nature of work, increased workload, responsibilities, competition and tight deadlines, all these in an environment which is dynamic, constantly changing and which has become very unpredictable.

In Japan, worker stress has been identified in 70 percent of the workers by a Fukoku Life Insurance Company study. In fact, there is a Japanese term, *Karoshi*, which means death from overworking, for employees who die after working more than 3,000 hours the previous year. Over, 2,300 individuals who die each year have karoshi listed as their cause of death. Employees in Germany and Britain, too, have suffered the ill effects of stress – costing their organisations more than DM 100 billion and £7 billion respectively (Stephen Robbins and David Decenzo, 2001).

In the United Kingdom, dealing with stress at work is now seen as part of the employer's contractual duty to provide employees with a 'safe system of work'. A number of significant cases in court have indicated an increase in stressful situations in the workplace, and very often the employers were seen at fault, for example *Johnstone v. Bloombury Area Health Authority [1992]*; *Walker v. Northumberland City Council [1995]*; *White v. Chief Constable of West Yorkshire [1999]* (Cornelius,2001).

Stress could be caused by various environmental factors, called stressors, and the perception of these stressors and the interaction of people with them. Various theories of stress have been presented by theorists from different fields of studies e.g. biology, applied medicine, psychology and, sociology among others.

The main theories discussed in this dissertation, are the person-environment fit theory, the burnout theory, external factors and predisposition through personality traits. These theories explain the causes of stress and examples of the factors are given.

The person-environment fit theory suggests that if the fit between the demands of the environment and the abilities of the person and the fit between the needs of the person and the supplies in the environment that relate to the person's needs do not occur, this causes stress on the person (Edward, Caplan and Harrison). Various theories also suggest that the reaction to stressful situations depends on how the person interprets or appraises, consciously or unconsciously the situation (e.g Lazarus, 1971). Therefore, what can be stressful for one might be as stressful for another. The burnout theory is an extreme form of stress which has occurred as a result of work overload, when demands are too excessive (Maslach, 1982). Another theory suggests that personality traits play an important role in how people interpret their situation around them, how their perception of control can thus differ, and as a consequence how they are affected by stressors differently; every person experiences stress in a different way (Kobasa, 1979).

As a result, in the face of stressful events, people react physiologically, psychologically and behaviourally. In brief, stress occurs, when people try to adapt or adjust to pressures and demands that is too much for them to cope with. They perceive these situations as a threat to them and signs and symptoms of stress then occur such as feeling of anxiety and depression, excessive drinking and smoking and are subject to various physical and psychological illnesses.

These eventually and avoidably will reflect on people's behaviour as stress is an emotional baggage that people carry with them. Therefore, stress which can be caused by factors both inside and outside the job environment will manifest itself at the workplace through people's attitudes and

behaviours. This has important implications for businesses, notably their effectiveness and their competitiveness.

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

Very often, the existence of stress and its impact on people are often ignored or underestimated by managers in organisations. The organisational consequences of employee behaviour, in stressful situations, in fact, have direct implications for the effectiveness of organizations. As a result of both health problems and poor performance at work, there is increased employee absenteeism, higher turnover, lower productivity and greater expenditure of companies as a consequence. Moreover, stress reduces innovation and initiative of employees, thus affecting directly the competitiveness of companies which is vital nowadays.

However, unfortunately, all too often, the management of stress is at the margins of activity undertaken by Human Resource Management in organisations and if is undertaken it is usually only when stress has already taken hold. And although the value of occupational health specialists, stress counselling can and do play a vital role, their use primarily is when the stress has already caused the damage to employee health and morale. At worst, stress management may be ignored altogether and, too often, its victims are stigmatised as suffering because of personal frailties, as 'stress is for wimps'.

The motivation to study the stress level in the airline industry has originated from the fact that the airline industry worldwide has been subject to various shocks recently, both economically and morally. For instance, Carolyn Burns, system director for mission integration and culture development for Provena Health, Kankakee, IL (USA), and who serves as a crisis consultant to the airline industry, says September 11 hit the airline industry particularly hard, and not just from an economic standpoint. "Although United Airlines

and American Airlines lost two aircraft each, along with 30 crewmembers, every airline worldwide was affected. Planes in flight were told to land immediately and did not reach their final destinations. Airliners were grounded for four days, and crews and passengers were stranded".¹⁾

Moreover, the airline industry is known to be a very stressful industry, both due to the nature and purpose of the work in this industry; the industry is a service orientated industry, dealing with people and caring for them, at the same time having to provide the highest level of comfort, security and safety for passengers and where even a little mistake or act of negligence can have important consequences.

1.3 PURPOSE AND VALUE OF THE DISSERTATION

The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to remind, highlight and sensitise managers about the causes and problems of stress, that is explore the factors of stress, outside and inside the workplace which affects the behaviour of people and which will subsequently have an impact of people's attitudes and behaviour at work.

The value of the study is to identify factors of stress (whether inside or outside the work environment) which has an effect on the behaviour of people, especially their behaviour and effect at the workplace. To achieve this, the study will first identify the most significant factors which cause stress, understand how individuals can differ in their threshold levels due to different personality traits, so as to have a better understanding of stress. This will enable managers better manage and deal with stress-causing factors, through better Human Resource Policies and Practices and welfare programs for their employees. This will help significantly to improve productivity and performance, increasing employee morale and commitment

¹ Josie Howard-Ruben,
<http://community.nursingspectrum.com/MagazineArticles/article.cfm?AID=9833M>

to the work and organisation. Quoting Professor Schlebusch (2000), knowledge and awareness are the first step in coping with stress.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

What is stress?

Which factors inside and outside the workplace has an effect on people's behaviour?

What are the effects of stress?

How do the stress factors affect behaviour and what are the possible consequences of stress for businesses?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

✦ **To evaluate: -**

what different factors can have a stressful effect on people

To determine: -

how far the work place, the individuals' own environment and personality traits can affect people's behaviour

To establish:

how stress can affect businesses and the possible consequences of their behaviour for organisations

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is both quantitative and qualitative based on empirical research. It will involve the collection of qualitative and quantitative data through the use of primary data (questionnaires) and secondary data.

1.6.1 SURVEY

The research technique used to carry out the survey will be through questionnaires. A survey has been carried out in the airline industry at the Durban International Airport to measure the prevalence of stress factors and to measure stress levels and its effects on the employees and managers of this particular industry. A stress questionnaire was administered to a sample of 35 employees, all ground staff including supervisors and managers, in 5 different airline companies and the Airport Company of South Africa in Durban.

1.6.2 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Research design is be mainly exploratory. Firstly the existing research and theories of different researchers and psychologists that have been undertaken related to this topic will be discussed in the literature review from multiple sources of information such as textbooks, journals, internet etc.

Secondary data has been gathered from books, journals, internet and other sources that are available.

Primary data will be obtained through an experience survey. The research also contains an observational analysis of the external environment in general to analyse the trends nowadays in relation to work and lifestyle. The observational analysis will help to do a scanning of the environment to understand the kind of working life people lead, their lifestyle and the most common health problems people suffer nowadays and what companies think about stress in general.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

- ✦ Due to the nature of the research, the possibility of bias exists in responses to the questions in the survey.
- ✦ With a broad topic of this kind and which relies heavily on research and experiments covering psychology, biology, sociology etc, some aspects of stress and its causes might have been left uncovered.
- ✦ Only six companies of the airline industry in Durban will be surveyed, and the airline industry in one area might not be truly indicative of all the airline industry in general or for other industries. However, an attempt will be made to generalise by filling in the gaps and as close to the reality as possible.
- ✦ The sample for questionnaires might not be big enough and does not cover all the different jobs existing in the airline. Thus the sample might not be representative of the true nature of stress in the airline industry. The questionnaire might not have addressed all matters related to stress and thus may not have covered all the aspects of stress.
- ✦ The usefulness of the survey will be limited to the participants' ability to report their own reactions; some influences of the work or outside may occur below conscious awareness, particularly after adaptation.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The study will be carried out in five chapters and will be as follows:

✦ **Chapter One: Introduction**

Chapter one is an introduction to the dissertation, defining the scope and the nature of the study, and putting the dissertation and the subject of 'stress' in context.

✦ **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Chapter two will cover the different theories on stress. The different theories will include will cover the external factors which cause stress i.e both inside and outside the workplace and the role of people's personality in stress. It will cover the Person-Environment fit theory, where the significance of the misfit between the person and the environment will be explored. The Burnout theory is another theory will be discussed which has received widespread attention and which is of particular importance for people-oriented professions. Theories on personalities, control, appraisal and cognition in relation to stress from different researchers will be discussed. The different theories will provide understanding of the subject and the work of leading researchers such as Cary Cooper, Caplan, Warr, Baron, Cornelius, Schlebusch and others will be used in the literature review and which will provide the basis for the analysis of questionnaires used in the airline industry in chapter 4.

✦ **Chapter Three: Survey and results**

The sample used for distribution of questionnaires will attempt to reach the ground staff of the airport and the airline companies in the various departments. The choice of the airline industry was based on the fact that the airline industry is a particularly stressful industry both

in terms of its environment, workload and as being a people-oriented industry. The questionnaires will attempt to measure stress in the airline industry, both in terms of workplace and other personal factors and how it affects the employees and their behaviour. Data analysis will be done using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

✦ ***Chapter Four: Analysis and interpretation of survey***

In this chapter the results of the questionnaires will be analysed and interpreted, to obtain the primary data. The survey results will then be explained. The information will be evaluated against the theory and see how far the different factors can be accounted for causing stress in people's life, both in relation to their workplace and other personal factors and problems.

✦ ***Chapter Five: Recommendations and Conclusion***

Based on the theory, the primary and secondary data, suggestions and recommendations for the company managers and individuals, will be put forward in order to improve the quality of the workplace environment and the quality of life both at the workplace and outside. The study will attempt to measure the level of stress how are the employees affected so as to help the people concerned to rebuild a healthier environment and to better cope with stress and alleviate it. The study will also identify the factors which cause stress outside the workplace and will then provide ways to enable the individual to better deal with the factors which cause stress and cope with stress in their daily lives, for example looking at the extent at which people's vulnerabilities to stress can be reduced through stress management techniques.

1.9 SUMMARY

Organisations consist mainly of people, so its effectiveness ultimately depends on their efforts as individuals. Outcomes for individual – job satisfaction and performance – represent key components of effectiveness. I

The impact of stress has many negative consequences on individuals, which causes high absenteeism, high rates of turnover, job dissatisfaction and poor performance at work among others.

Therefore, companies and people need to acknowledge the existence and the effects of stress and be proactive in order to minimise and prevent any damages before it reaches critical levels. This study therefore, will put the problem of stress in context, explore the factors which cause stress and emphasise the effects of stress and its effects on behaviour. The dissertation will examine and discuss the various approaches to the theories of stress. The case of the South African airline industry will be studied where stress factors will be identified and stress among employees measured, all based on the different theories mentioned. These will enable managers and individuals better able to identify the causes of stress and how to cope with it.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIES OF STRESS FACTORS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explore the causes of stress and will cover briefly the physiological effects, but mainly the psychological and behavioural effects on people and hence their consequences on people's health, behaviour and their implications for businesses. The chapter, therefore, is mainly concerned with how stress can affect the behaviour of people and how these behaviours affect businesses. To achieve this, first a literature review has been done and this chapter has attempted to cover all the various theories available from various researches in various fields and which will throw more light in the understanding of this complex subject of stress.

2.1.1 STRESS: DEFINITION AND CONTEXT

Stress is a phenomenon which has always existed but it seems it has amplified and taken new dimensions today. There could be various reasons for this, may be because there is much more stress today, the nature of contemporary stress is somehow different and more dangerous, or because scientific research has increasingly confirmed the crucial role stress can play in causing aggravating different disorders¹, the move to less healthy lifestyle that the past century has adopted among others. Stress is a phenomenon which needs to be well understood in order to be able to cope with and to minimise its negative effects.

Psychological stress has no exact definition as it has indeed indeed proved difficult to define: theorists do not agree as to the precise meaning of stress (Douglas Caroll, 1992). However, most people have some common

¹ Article by Hans Seyle, American Institute of Stress, <http://www.stress.org/>

understanding of what stress signifies given the widespread 'epidemic' of stress in the 20th century where stress is now part of everyday vocabulary.

Stephen P. Robbins (2001), defines it as such: " A dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity or constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important". The American physiologist, Walter Cannon, who was the first to use the word "stress" in a non-engineering context, regards it as a disturbing force, something which upset the person's equilibrium, disrupted the usual balance. From this perspective, stress would refer to those events or situations that challenge a person's psychological and/or physiological equilibrium or balance, and which do not permit easy accommodation. Because of their meaning and the nature of the information they contain, individuals have to mobilise extensive psychological and/or physiological resources to deal with them; they cannot be handled 'on automatic' (Douglas Carroll, 1992). Stress includes arousal and active attempts at coping (McGrath, 1970).

In brief, stress is the "wear and tear" the physical bodies experience as people adjust to the continually changing environment, to threat or other challenges; it has physical and emotional effects on people and can create positive or negative feelings. Stress can originate with the death of a loved one, the birth of a child, a job promotion, or a new relationship, where people experience stress as they readjust their lives. In so adjusting to different circumstances, stress will help or hinder people depending on how one reacts to it.

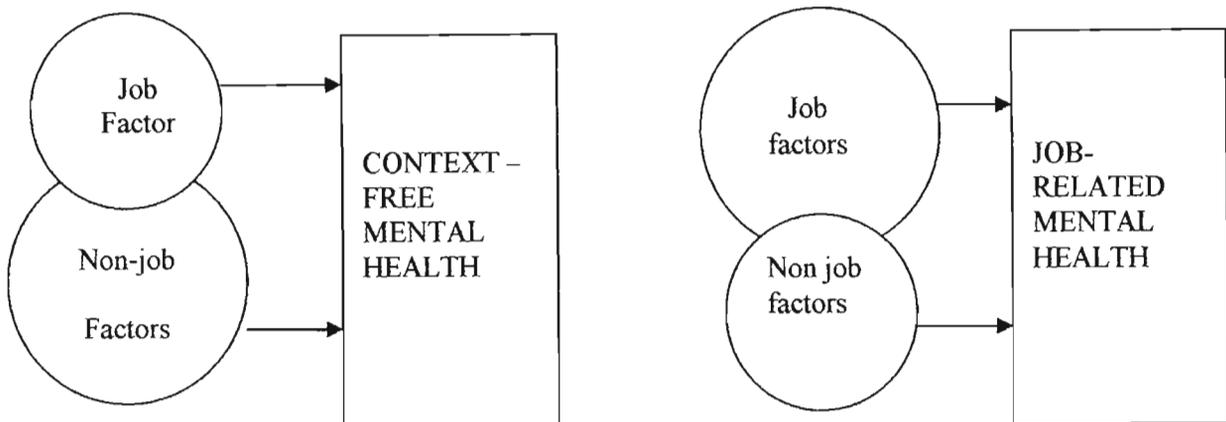
Schlebusch (2000) states that stress can be chronic or enduring, specific or general. Chronic stress is caused by everyday stressors or which happens over a long period of time, for example, someone who suffers for years in an unrewarding personal or work relationship. Acute stressors are sudden and intense which can lead to a crisis, such as a sudden traumatic event. Each

person faces unique stressors because of differences in age, phase of life, occupation, socio-economic status, personality and lifestyle (Schlebusch, 2000).

Peter Warr (1987) suggests that job and non job factors are intercorrelated and mutually interactive, as indicated by the overlap between circles in the Fig 2.1.1 below. Studies which measure job factors alone are therefore likely also to reflect non-job factors to some extent.

According to Warr (1987), the relative importance of job and non-job factors in determining mental health is likely to depend upon which form of the latter is under consideration, context-free or job related mental health. This is illustrated schematically in Fig 2.1.1, where magnitude of impact is indicated by the diagram of a circle representing each type of factor. In the case of context-free mental health, concerned with life in general, it seems probable that non-job factors are usually of greater significance than those within a job. This is shown to the left of Fig 2.1.1. Non-job factors arise from events and processes in other environments, such as one's family, local community, social groups, educational networks, leisure milieux etc. The job-related mental health (job satisfaction and job related anxiety, for instance) is by definition primarily determined by characteristics of the occupational environment; this is shown to the right of Fig 2.1.1 (Peter Warr 1987).

Fig 2.1 Schematic representation of the relative importance of paid employment and other factors influencing context-free and job-related mental health. (Source: Peter Warr, 1987, *Work unemployment and Mental Health*).



2.1.2 CONSEQUENCES OF STRESS – EFFECTS, SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Occasional stress is a natural part of life. However, when it gets out of control, it can become very harmful. Often, a build-up of stress involves a problem that stays with someone for months, or even years. Financial pressure is a prime example. Other times, it might be something beyond a person's control, for example an accident. Still another time, it could be a problem that just seems too big to handle. Very often people cannot deal with the cause of the stress, at least not quickly enough. As a result, the stress persists and begins to take its toll on²:

² NASD Review 24/2002: Farm Safety Association Home Page <http://www.cdc.gov/nasd/docs/d001501-d001600/d001558/d001558.html>

- **Health.** When someone is under stress, the body begins to 'gear up' for action. This makes the person stronger and more alert, at least in the short term. In cases of extreme danger, this extra strength can save one's life. Other times, it can help you get through a job or help you adjust to a major change.

However, when people 'gear up' under stress, their body begins to do more of some things and less of others. For example, blood circulation increases, but digestion slows down or even stops.

Once the stress ends, the body goes to work to restore the balance. However, if stress returns too soon, the body will never have time to get back on an even keel. Eventually, this can lead to major health problems. Some, like heart disease and ulcers, can put you in hospital. Others (sleeplessness, headaches, poor digestion) are less acute, but still serious.

- **Relations with other people are affected.** Under stress, most people become so wrapped up in their own problems that they forget about everyone else. At the same time, they begin to take out their feelings on family and friends.

The result can be bad feelings between family members, along with the loss of friends. As well, stress quickly becomes a family problem, not just the incumbent's own.

- **Efficiency at work.** For a short time, stress can make a person a better, more efficient worker. However, over the long haul or at high level of stress, this will gradually wear a person down. The person becomes physically weaker and begin to tire easily. At the same time, the person will find it difficult to concentrate and will begin to make poor management decisions.
- **Impact on life.** Because of weariness and lack of concentration, one also will become much more accident-prone. Stress will have a snowballing

effect, because all of the problems it causes -- health, family, and work -- will become new troubles in one's life (Source: NASD Review, Farm Safety Association).

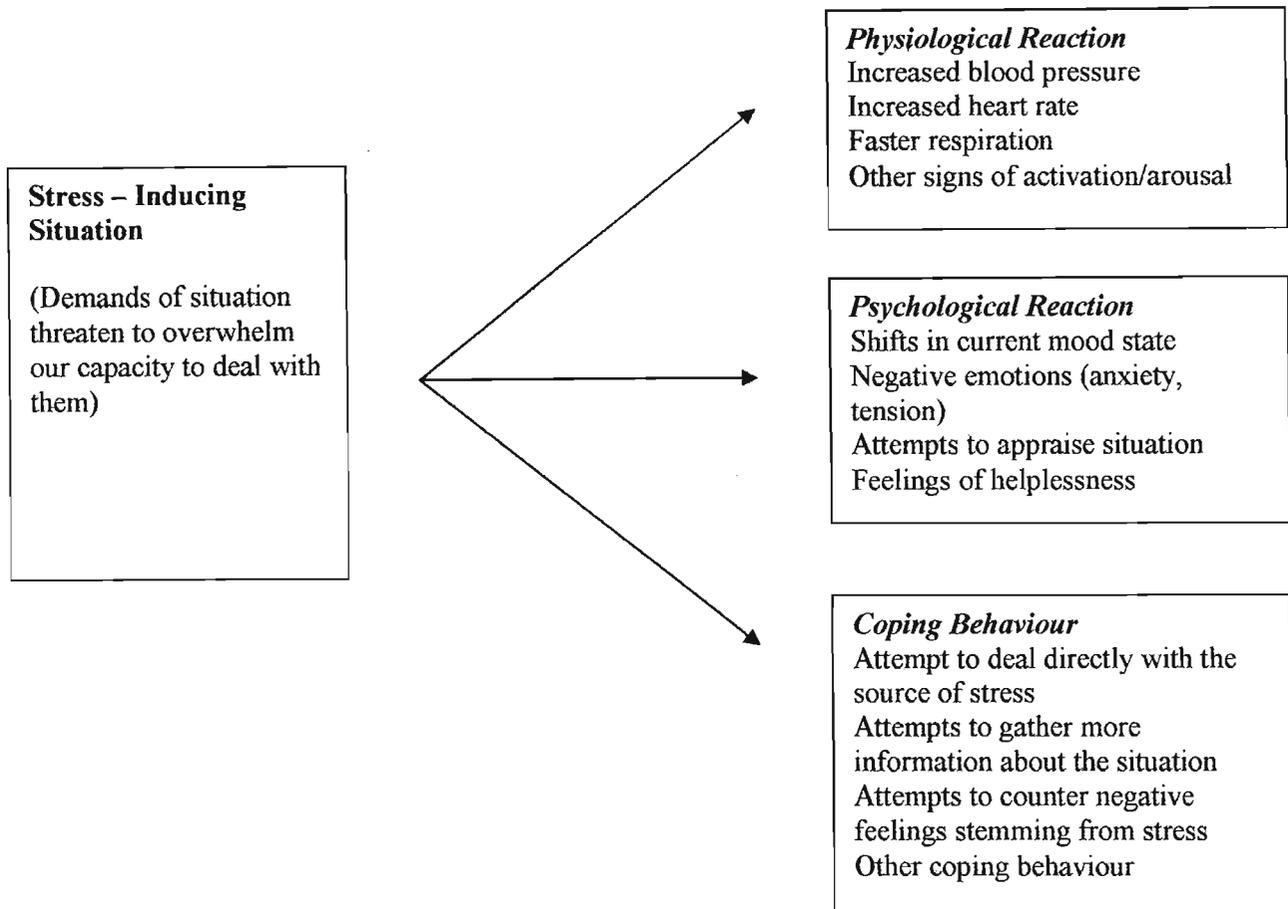
Signs and symptoms of stress are numerous and people suffer from them in the everyday life. Reactions to stress vary greatly: everything from damp palms, shaking knees through intense feelings of despair or other abnormal behaviour. People respond to stress *physiologically*. As a positive influence, stress can help compel us to action; it can result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression, which in turn can lead to health problems such as headaches, upset stomach, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease, and stroke.

The stress reactions, as noted by Hans Selye, a scientist who has studied stress for several decades, are originally designed to help us cope with threat or danger. They therefore include a rise in heart rate and blood pressure, increased respiration, and a diversion of blood to skeletal muscles – the ones used in “fight” or “flight” reactions. According to Selye, moreover, such reactions occur in three distinct phases which together constitute the General Adaptation Syndrome. Initially there is a stage of resistance, during which reserves are organised and coping occurs. Finally, if stress persists too long, people may enter a stage of exhaustion, in which reserves are drained. It is at this time that serious illness or damage often occurs.

In addition to the physiological reactions just described, people react *psychologically*. There tends to be the feeling that the situation should not exist, but because of it the person feels disappointed or annoyed, and eventually is prone to anxiety, depression, anger, hostility, inadequacy, and low frustration and tolerance (Eugene McKenna, 1994). The person may even feel tension and fear

in certain circumstances. The person under stress actively seeks to evaluate or appraise the stress-inducing situation, to determine just how dangerous it really is. Finally, people also respond to stress overtly, through *behavioural reactions*, which is the behavioural adaptation, with a variety of *coping behaviours*. These range from attempts to gather more information about the stressful situation through direct steps to deal with it, and may also include intrapsychic strategies – ones designed simply to make us feel better e.g. taking a drink; convincing ourselves that there really isn't much danger). When coping is directed toward changing the environment instead of toward changing the person's responses, the behaviour has been called adjustment rather than adaptation (Wohlwill, 1975). Signs of stress can thus be seen through the overt coping behaviours; people engage in behaviour which is atypical from their normal behaviour, for e.g. excessive drinking or smoking.

Because stress involves physiological responses, internal psychological states, and overt behaviour, it has been studied by scientists in several different fields e.g. biology, psychology, sociology. From these studies and researches, increasing evidence shows that suggests that stress can affect our health, our relations with others, and our behaviour in many different settings. In this dissertation, stress factors which causes physiological and psychological effects will be discussed as these physiological and psychological effects are consequences manifest and impact on behaviour.

Fig 2.2 Reactions to Stress: An Overview (Baron, 1983)Source: *Organisational Behaviour*, R. Baron, 1983

2.1.3 CAUSES OF STRESS

The subjective appraisal of an environment is critical to its capacity to cause stress (Sundstrom, 1986). Stress factors are omnipresent and have various sources e.g job-related tensions, workload and longer hours, working parents trying to balance work and family responsibilities, changes in lifestyle and the

more uncertain environment are all potential sources of stress. Whether the factors (environmental, organisational and individual) which act as potential sources of stress become actual stress depends on individual differences such as their experience and personality when appraising the environment (Stephen Robbins, 2001).

Stress inducing situations could be those seen as burdensome, threatening, ambiguous or boring. Researchers have found stress intensified when aversive or threatening conditions are uncontrollable and unpredictable (Averill, 1973; Glass and Singer, 1972; Baum et al., 1981). Stress also seems to increase with uncertainty about the individual's ability to cope (McGrath, 1976).

In section 2.2 in this chapter, we will explore in detail the factors which cause stress and its effects with an emphasis of the consequences in organisational settings. Because stress is a complex subject and an important process with far-reaching effects, we will therefore seek to provide with a broad introduction to the various theories and current knowledge about it.

The major causes of stress will be discussed: first, these will involve the environment of people – several aspects of organisations in which people work and their social environment – and secondly, some traits and characteristics possessed by individuals which determine the different threshold that individuals have with regard to stress.

Finally, we will consider some of the major effects of stress, including its impact on health briefly and work-related behaviours.

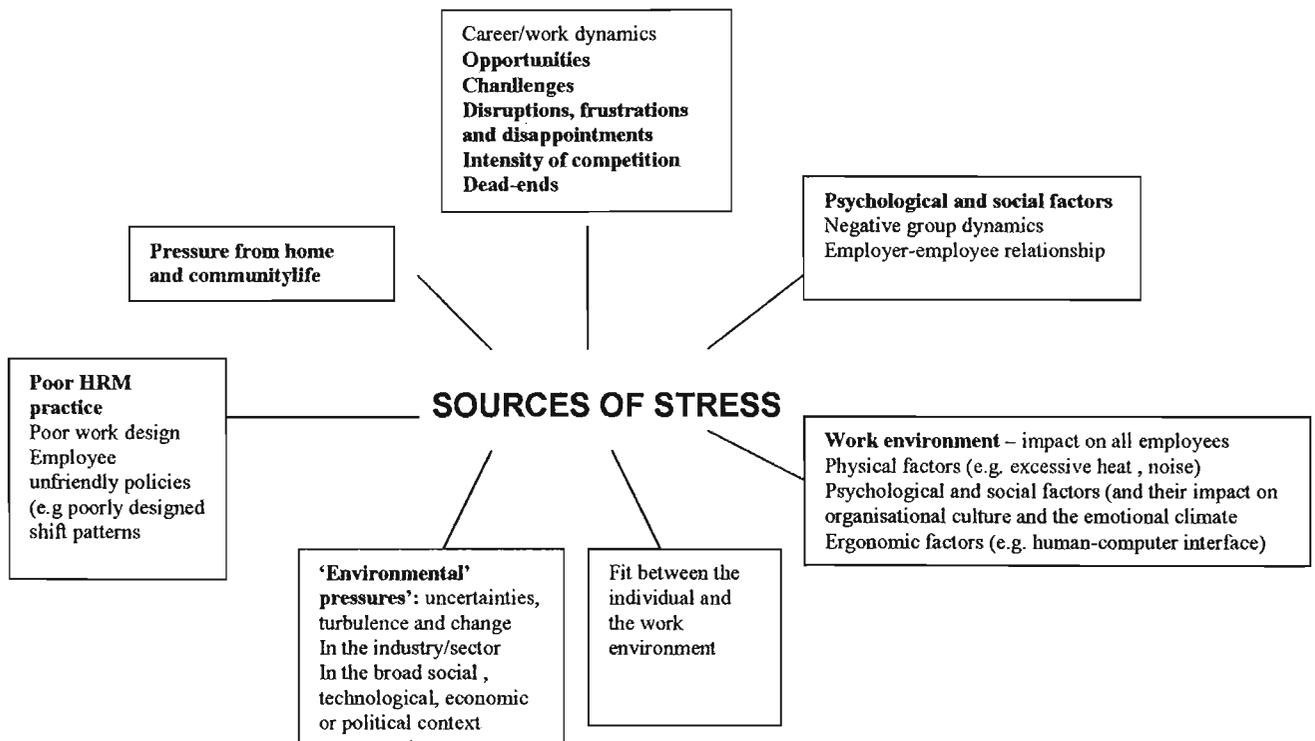
Cornelius, 1992, gives a list of sources of stress which exist in the environment, often referred to as stressors. These include:

- Psychological and social factors, such as negative team dynamics, uncertainties or confusion about the employer-employee relationship, or personal dispositions or vulnerabilities.
- The work physical environment (such as excessive noise or heat, or physical and chemical hazards) which has the potential to affect all employees.
- Lack of fit between the individual and the work group, or the work environment (person-environment fit, where 'the environment' may be the physical environment, the 'psychological environment' of psychological and social factors, or both), referred to as the person-environment (P-E) fit (Van Harrison in Cooper and Payne, 1978; EU Working Time Directive, 1998).
- Poor HRM policy and practice, such as poor work design or employee-unfriendly shift patterns.
- Factors that originate outside the workplace but which would manifest itself in the workplace (for example, pressures at home such as financial problems or marital difficulties).

A number of stressors have their origin from the work place as well as from the vulnerabilities of the individual or factors that originate from home life, summarised in the diagram below:

Fig 2.3: SOURCES OF STRESS

Source : Nelarine Cornelius, 1992, *Human Resource Management*, 2nd ed., p322
 – sources of stress



2.2 THEORIES OF STRESS: FACTORS IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

The theories of stress have long recognised the importance of both the person and environment in understanding the nature and consequences of stress. Individual constructs relevant to stress research include personality traits, mainly Type A and B behaviour (Friedman and Rosenman, 1959), and locus of control (Rotter, 1966), hardiness (Kobasa, 1979), and coping styles (e.g. Menaghan, 1983). The environment has been construed as stressful life events (Rabkin and Struening, 1976), daily hassles which are frequent and persistent and constitute background stress (DeLongis et al., 1982), and chronic stressors such as role conflict and ambiguity (Kahn et al., 1964; Jackson and Schuler, 1985), role overload and underload (French and Caplan, 1972). The dual emphasis on the person and environment in stress research, indicates that behaviour, attitudes, and well-being are determined jointly by the person and the environment.

2.2.1 THE PERSON-ENVIRONMENT FIT THEORY

Terry Beehr highlights many of the factors that constitute the stress-strain process. He argues that organisations which are characterised by environmental *uncertainty* will make it difficult for people to achieve their objectives, as well as maintaining any sense of personal well-being (Cary Cooper, 1998). The relationship between the person and environment in the contribution to stress have been formalised in the person-environment fit (P-E) fit theory of stress by Edward, Caplan and Harrison. The core basis of P-E fit theory is that stress arises not from the person or environment separately, but rather by their fit or congruence with one another. In this theory, as explained below, Jeff Edwards, Roberts Caplan, and Van Harrison explore the significance misfit between the person and the environment (Cary Cooper, 1998).

This theory identifies two types of fit: the fit between the demands of the environment and the abilities of the person (demand-ability fit) and the fit between the needs of the person and the supplies in the environment that relate to the person's needs (needs-supplies fit). Therefore, the principle of the theory is: stress arises when environmental supplies do not meet the person's needs or when the environmental demands exceed the person's abilities. Needs is characterised in this theory in general terms, encompassing innate biological and psychological requirements, values acquired through learning and socialisation, and motives to achieve desired ends (French and Kahn, 1962; Harrison, 1985). Supplies refer to extrinsic and intrinsic resources and rewards that may fulfil the person's needs, such as food, shelter, money, social involvement, and the opportunity to achieve (Harrison, 1978). Demands include quantitative and qualitative job requirements, role expectations, and group and organisational norms, whereas abilities include the aptitude, skills, training, time, and energy the person may gather to meet demands.

For both needs-supplies fit and demands-abilities fit, P-E theory requires that person and environment constructs are commensurate, meaning they refer to the same content dimension. For example, needs-supplies fit regarding achievement should entail the comparison of need for achievement with opportunities for achievement in the environment. Likewise, demands-abilities fit regarding quantitative workload would involve comparing the amount of work to be done the amount of work the person can do.

Therefore, the definition of stress is drawn by Harrison (1978, 1985), who states that stress arises when:

- (1) the environment does not provide adequate supplies to meet the person's needs; or
- (2) the abilities of the person fall short of demands that are requisite to receiving supplies.

Cary Cooper (1998), highlights three features of this definition. First, stress is defined not in terms of the person or the environment, but rather as their degree of misfit.

This definition here is in contrast with definitions of stress as a characteristic of the environment or as a psychological or physiological response by the person. However, the theory only brings these definitions further and emphasises the relationship between the person and the environment, explaining how it can cause stress: it is the subjective environment which will determine whether it is a stress inducing situation to the person or not, and thus reaction will depend accordingly. Objective stressful condition as suggested by environment characteristics is relative, and what might be stressful for one might not be stressful for another. Therefore, the needs and supplies or the demands and abilities differ from person to person and hence, the fit or misfit, therefore, stressful environment has different degrees to different persons. This also contributes to explanations as to why certain people are affected by a stressful environment and some are not. This phenomenon will be discussed further in the dissertation.

Second, according to Cooper (1998), this definition of stress inducing conditions, stipulates that a misfit between demands and abilities itself does not itself constitute stress. Rather, excess demands generate stress only if meeting demands is required to receive supplies, or if demands have been internalised as goals or motives of the person, as when norms or role expectations are accepted by the person as guidelines for his or her own behaviour. Third, as noted previously, the P-E fit theory views subjective misfit as the critical pathway from the person and environment to strain. Therefore, people view stress as subjective rather than objective misfit between person and environment constructs. In sum, we define stress as a subjective appraisal indicating that

supplies are insufficient to fulfil the person's needs, with the provision that insufficient supplies may occur as a consequence of unmet demands.

According to P-E fit theory, subjective P-E misfit leads to two set of outcomes. One set of outcomes comprises psychological, physical, and behavioural stress, defined as deviations from normal functioning (Caplan et al., 1980; Harrison, 1978). *Psychological stress* causes depression and anxiety, dissatisfaction, dysphoria, insomnia or restlessness, among others. *Physiological stress* include elevated blood pressure, elevated serum cholesterol, and compromised immune system functioning. *Behavioural* symptoms of stress include smoking, overeating, and elevated blood pressure, the cumulative experience of strains over time can lead to mental and physical illnesses. Conversely, a sustained good P-E fit can produce positive health outcomes (Edwards and Cooper, 1988; Harrison, 1978, 1985).

A second set of outcomes, according to the theory, involves *coping and defence* which are efforts made by the individual to resolve P-E misfit. Coping entails efforts to improve objective P-E fit, either by changing the objective person (i.e., adaptation) or the objective environment (i.e., environmental mastery) (French et al., 1974). For example, a person experiencing excessive demands at work may seek training to enhance his or her abilities or attempt to negotiate a decreased workload with his or her supervisor (Harrison, 1978). Defence involves efforts to enhance subjective P-E fit through a cognitive distortion of the subjective person or environment (e.g. repression, projection, denial) without changing their objective counterparts (French et al., 1974). For instance, a person may respond to role overload by overestimating his or her abilities or by downplaying or ignoring excess demands. Harrison(1978) notes that defence may also include the denial of experienced strain, such that the person acknowledges subjective P-E misfit but discounts its resulting negative impacts o health. Another form of defence is described by French et al. (1974), who indicate that a person may respond to subjective misfit by reducing the perceived importance of the dimension on which misfit occurs, as when a person disengages from

unattainable goals (Kingler, 1975; Schuler, 1985). The choice from among these alternative behaviours as a method of adjustment is influenced by various person and environment factors, such as stable preferences, coping styles, and environmental resources and constraints.

Studies suggests that indeed work can be a potent source of background stress, that it can impose on the individual conflicting and often excessive demands, and that it contributes substantially to the daily hassles that individuals encounter (Douglas Carroll, 1992).

Whether one works in a hospital or classroom, office or factory, stress at work can be a very real experience. More and more people are suffering from stress and stress-related illnesses. New technology has added to the burden of information overload as well as accelerating the pace of work with demands for a greater immediacy of response (e.g. WWW, faxes, emails, etc.) (Cary Cooper, 1998). In addition, with increasing changes in work structure, longer working hours, the short-term contact culture and 'downsizing' — where companies shed jobs, and outsourcing, — is becoming the norm, with less secure employment contracts, unpleasant working conditions and climate, many people are finding that these are impacting on their life in general — their health, happiness and home life — not to mention their performance at work .

Moreover, with increasing competition that businesses face, organisational success has become a matter of life and death, and organisations with its people engage in a daily battle of the fittest for survival. People work longer hours, more intensely, and with a more service-oriented world, deal more with and various kinds of people. The work environment, hence the organisational causes of stress, are major factors. The work environment and climate affects human beings as most of their time is spent at work, the job being a major part of people's lives and a determinant or reflection of one's social position. Job stress is therefore exceedingly common in many organisations.

A large body of research has attested to the pervasiveness of work stress and its impact on health (Douglas Carroll, 1992). Several factors that contribute to this unsettling state of affairs will be considered with the help of the various theories from numerous authors, and the researches and studies which have been undertaken.

2.2.2 THE BURNOUT THEORY – AND THE RESULTING BEHAVIOURS

Job burnout is a related concept to stress, and a consequence of excessive job stress. Job burnout is described as being a consequence of a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job, unrealistic expectations or ambitions (Eugene McKenna, 1994). This theory states that there are three key dimensions of this response which are an overwhelming exhaustion; feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job; and a sense of ineffectiveness and failure (Maslach, 1982a; Maslach and Jackson, 1981b; Maslach and Leiter, 1997). The experience can impair both personal and social functioning. While some people may quit the job as a result of burnout, others will stay on, but will only do the bare minimum rather than their very best. This decline in the quality of work and in both physical and psychological health can be costly – not just for the individual worker, but for everyone affected by that person.

It is believed that for many years, burnout has been recognised as an occupational hazard for various people-oriented professions, such as human services, education, and health care. The therapeutic or service relationships that such providers develop with recipients require an ongoing and intense level of personal, emotional contact. Although such relationships can be rewarding and engaging, they can also be quite stressful. Within such occupations, the prevailing norms are to be selfless and put others' needs first; to work long hours and do whatever it takes to help a client or patient or student; to go the extra mile and to give one's all. Moreover, the organisational environments for these jobs

are shaped by various social, political, and economic factors (such as funding cutbacks or policy restrictions) that result in work settings that are high in demands and low in resources. Recently, as other occupations have become more oriented to 'high-touch' customer service, the phenomenon of burnout has become relevant for these jobs as well (Maslach and Leiter, 1997).

Cook, 1988, also states that those affected by burnout are often competent and able executives and, in particular, as mentioned above, they can be found the helping professions, such as counselling, teaching, childcare, policing, and nursing.

The burnout theory is a multidimensional theory conceptualising burnout in terms of its three core components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1993; Maslach and Jackson, 1981, 1986).

Emotional exhaustion, according to the theory, refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources. The major sources of this exhaustion are work overload and personal conflict at work. Workers feel drained and used up, without any source of replenishment. They lack enough energy to face another day or another person in need. The emotional exhaustion component represents the basic individual stress dimension of burnout (Cary Cooper, 1998).

Depersonalisation refers to a negative, cynical, or excessively detached response to other people, which often includes a loss of idealism. It usually develops in response to the overload of emotional exhaustion, and is self-protective at first – an emotional buffer of 'detached concern'. But the risk is that the detachment can turn into dehumanisation. The depersonalisation component represents the interpersonal dimension of burnout (Cary Cooper, 1998).

Reduced personal accomplishment refers to a decline in feelings of competence and productivity at work. This lowered sense of self-efficacy has been linked to depression and an inability to cope with the demands of the job, and it can be exacerbated by a lack of social support and of opportunities to develop professionally. Workers experience a growing sense of inadequacy about their ability to help clients, and this may result in a self-imposed verdict of failure. The personal accomplishment component represents the self-evaluation dimension of burnout (Cary Cooper, 1998)".

The provision of service or care can indeed be a very demanding and involving occupation. Emotional exhaustion is thus not an uncommon response to such job overload, and that depersonalisation is an attempt for people to cope with the emotional stresses of their work. Moderating one's compassion for clients by maintaining an emotional distance from them 'detached concern' was viewed as a way of protecting oneself from intense emotional arousal that could interfere with the ability to function effectively on the job (Cary Cooper, 1998). However, the danger in this kind of behaviour is there an imbalance of excessive detachment and little concern can lead staff to respond to clients in negative, callous, and dehumanised ways, and not in a very professional way. Thus, excessive detachment, or depersonalisation, could impair performance and be detrimental to the quality of care.

The significance of this three-dimensional model is that it clearly places the individual stress experience within a social context. What has been distinctive about burnout (as opposed to other stress reactions) is the interpersonal framework of the phenomenon.

2.2.3 OCCUPATIONAL DEMANDS: SOME JOBS ARE MORE STRESSFUL THAN OTHERS.

“In summer 1981, more than twelve thousand U.S. air traffic controllers took a dramatic step – they went out on strike despite the fact that this action was viewed as illegal by both their government (their employer) and the general public. One major reason behind this drastic decision was the controllers’ concern with gaining better working conditions – ones that would help them cope with the tremendous pressures of their job. As evidence for the necessity of a shorter workweek and longer vacations, the striking controllers pointed to data indicating that few persons survive for ten or even five years in their job. And they also noted that those who do remain often pay a high price in terms of stress-related illnesses e.g. high blood pressure, ulcers and skin disorders. While some authorities have questioned the accuracy of these claims, it is clear that air controllers do face higher levels of stress than workers in many other fields, and their plight, in turn, calls our attention to a basic fact: some jobs are indeed much more stressful than others” (Robert A. Baron, 1983).

According to the participants of the strike, one major reason behind their action was simple: they desperately needed relief from the intense stress associated with their jobs.

Systematic evidence on this issue is provided by a recent study of the level of stress in more than 130 occupations – e.g., physician, office manager, foreman, and waitress/waiter – are relatively high in stress (Baron, 1983). In contrast, other jobs, such as craft worker, maid, farm labourer, and college professor, are much lower in this regard. However, until recently occupational stress researchers have largely ignored university employees, presumably on the assumption that such occupations are relatively stress-free. A study carried out by Carroll and Cross (1990) on university employees, has reported that this is a highly questionable assumption, and it is in fact quite clear that the job demands of university employees do indeed fit in the description of the conditions of the burnout theory.

In addition to differences in overall level of stress, jobs also differ in terms of the pattern of stressors they present. For example, evidence gathered by Parasuraman and Alutto suggests that high-level (managerial) jobs often involve stress from such sources as time pressure, too many meetings, or difficulties in attaining productivity standards. In contrast, lower-level jobs more often involve stress deriving from technical problems (e.g., equipment breakdowns) or role frustration (e.g., low status, inadequate supervision). Similarly, holding job-level constant, equivalent positions in different departments or subsystems within a given company also expose their occupants to contrasting patterns of stress. Thus, the problems confronted by individuals in administration, production, sales, and supply tend to differ sharply (Baron, 1983).

The Wall Street Journal published a study carried out by Dow Jones & Company in America in 1996, which showed an evaluation of 250 jobs of how different occupations ranked in terms of stress levels. Among the criteria used in the rankings were overtime, quotas, deadlines, competitiveness, physical demands, environmental conditions, hazards encountered, initiative required, stamina required, win-lose situations, and working in the public eye. Some of the jobs and their respective ranks (numbered on left-hand side) are shown below:

Rank Score	Rank Score
1. U.S president	47. Auto salesperson
2. Firefighter	50. College professor
3. Senior executive	60. School Principal
6. Surgeon	103. Market research Analyst
10. Air traffic controller	104. Personnel recruiter
12. Public relations executive	113. Hospital administrator
16. Advertising account executive	119. Economist
20. Stockbroker	122. Mechanical engineer
22. Pilot	124. Chiropractor
25. Architect	132. Technical writer
31. Lawyer	149. Retail salesperson
33. General physician	173. Purchasing agent
35. Insurance agent	193. Broadcast technician
42. Advertising salesperson	229. Actuary

Source: Stephen P. Robbins, *Organisational Behaviour*, 9th ed., p. 568

2.2.4 THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE WORKPLACE

The physical working conditions of the workplace should normally provide an environment which is stable, safe with an adequate level of security, and which protect people against physical threat. Physical environment encompasses, among others, heat and cold, noise, illumination level, equipment design and vibration, as well as those which give rise to physical danger or require physical effort. The impact of environmental features is thought to be associated with the duration of exposure; brief or intermittent work in poor physical conditions is likely to cause stress on people (Peter Warr, 1987).

The discomfort caused by the environment e.g. excessive heat, cold or noise will give rise to negative feelings about the work and this impacts on the negative influence of job-related well-being or through the indirect psychological influence of ill-health which is primarily physical (Peter Warr, 1987). Some environments (e.g building sites, coal mines, battle-fields, etc.) contain generally higher levels of threat than do others. Perceived hazards within these environments may give rise to intermittent or continuing high levels of anxiety, sometimes accompanied by deterioration in task performance (e.g Idzikowki and Baddeley 1983). Second, the raised danger levels in these environments may cause accidents, and jobs which require intense physical efforts cause physical strain but has an indirect psychological impact as well. In short, one major source of stress in work settings involves the nature and demands of various jobs.

2.2.5 PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS OF STRESS AT WORK

It is very important to highlight that physical factors are not the only stress factors. More than ever, psychological factors and social factors affect people and are major stressors nowadays, as more industries are less production and manufacturing, but rather service industries and project-oriented tasks which give more responsibilities and accountability. Stress factors thus take a different

shape than just production environment which typically contains physical stress factors, such as noise and hard physical work. Role conflict and ambiguity, tensions and disagreement among colleagues or with superiors, competition, and individuals' roles at work are all psychological factors which have consequences on people.

2.2.5.1 Role conflict: stress from conflicting – and often unreconciliable – demands.

A given position within an organisation requires or expects individuals to behave in certain ways or project a certain image of themselves. For example, top executives are expected to be decisive and aggressive, while sales persons are expected to be friendly and cheerful, at least when dealing with potential customers. Together, such expectations constitute a role – a general set of guidelines indicating how persons holding certain positions should or ought to behave. In many cases, the presence of such role is beneficial as they people the trouble of deciding what constitutes appropriate behaviour in many situations (Baron, 1983). However, very often, roles can be the source of considerable discomfort and stress, especially in situations where different groups of people with whom an individual interacts hold contradictory expectations about how he or she should behave, or is not compatible with the individual's personality or nature. Under these conditions, role conflict exists, and the person in question may find herself pulled in different and incompatible directions. The person is sandwiched between two groups of people who expect a different kind of service, or expect a service different from the one that is presently rendered – or if the person is doing things s/he does not want to do or does not think are part of his or job description, then this creates a basis for conflict (Eugene McKenna, 1994). As conflict develops, a lowering of job satisfaction and feeling of tension about the job occurs especially if the conflicting demands originates from people higher in the hierarchy (French & Caplan, 1970; Kahn et al., 1964).

An example could be of a first-line manager, where the employees working under his/her direction may perceive his/her job as that of helping them to reach their goals. They may also expect him/her to view them as friends and to “look out” for their interests at all times. In contrast, management may perceive its job as that of keeping employees “in line” and assuring that they follow company policy. As one can readily see, the person facing this situation probably cannot easily satisfy these contrasting expectations at the same time. The result: she may experience considerable stress stemming from role conflict (Baron, 1983).

Unfortunately, role conflict (in one form or another) appears to be quite common and there is empirical evidence from French and Caplan which demonstrated that it is often quite stressful in nature. Additional findings suggest that role conflict is also linked to reduced job satisfaction and to reports of job-related stress.

2.2.5.2 Role ambiguity: Stress from uncertainty.

Even if an individual manages to avoid the strain associated with role conflict, he or she may still encounter an even more common source of on-the-job stress – role ambiguity. Sometimes, the importance of clearly specifying the requirements of the job is overlooked. Role ambiguity occurs when individuals are uncertain about several matters pertaining to their jobs: the scope of their responsibilities, what the job entails, the limits of their authority and that of others, company rules, job security, and the methods used to evaluate their work. Under such circumstances a number of undesirable consequences are likely to ensue (Kahn et al., 1964) It is rare that someone would possess complete knowledge about all these issues which causes the problem of role ambiguity to be quite common in organisational settings. In fact, it has been reported by thirty-five to sixty percent of the persons questioned about it in various studies. Role ambiguity, like role conflict, produces several negative effects. To the extent it exists, job satisfaction

is lowered, self-esteem may be reduced, depressed mood, low motivation to work, intention to quit the job, negative feelings of tension and futility may be generated, and a general dissatisfaction with life (French and Caplan, 1970; Margolis et al., 1974). In short, such ambiguity can be a major source of job stress and should be avoided wherever and whenever possible.

2.2.5.3 Overload and underload: Doing too much, and doing too little.

“Job stress” is very synonymous to the image of someone who is overwhelmed by enormous amount of work, of someone caught in the trap of trying to do too much in too little time. In this case, research findings suggest that common sense is not too far off the mark. Overload is often a major source of job-related stress. French and Caplan (1973) have differentiated between quantitative and qualitative overload. Quantitative refers having “too much to do” while qualitative refers to work which is “too difficult”. Persons who experience these situations of overload, show clear signs of stress: both their cholesterol and their heart rates are elevated, relative to persons who do not encounter work overload. These and related findings seem to leave little room for doubt: being asked to do too much on one’s job is often a major source of stress (Baron, 1983).

Therefore, the stress-inducing impact of overload is hardly surprising. However, the fact that being asked to do too little in one’s work can also be quite stressful. Baron explains that such underutilisation, as it is often termed, generally yields monotony and intense boredom, and these reactions, in turn, can be quite stressful. Two factors could contribute to the link between underutilisation and stress. First, most persons wish to feel useful and needed. Thus, when they discover that they are doing very little and accomplishing next to nothing in their jobs, their self-esteem may be threatened. And as we noted threat is a basic component of stress. Second, human beings appear to have a strong and basic need for stimulation. Their preferred state is definitely not that of staring blankly into space. On the contrary, they prefer to interact with the world around them.

For this reason, a job that demands too little – and that provides too little in the way of stimulation – can be unpleasant, boring and stressful (Baron, 1983).

2.2.5.4 Responsibility for people.

In any organisation there is a division of responsibility. Each responsibility is different in nature and function: some persons deal primarily with financial matters (e.g., budgets, accounting); others handle supplies equipment, and others deal primarily with people. Like different occupations where some are more stressful than others, research findings suggest that levels of stress for different responsibilities within the organisation also seem to vary. In general, people responsible for other people – who must deal with them, motivate them, and make decisions about them – experience higher levels of stress than persons who handle other aspects of a business. Increased responsibility for people frequently means that one has to spend more time interacting with others, attending meetings, and, in consequence, more time in trying to meet deadline pressures and schedules (French and Caplan, 1970). Such persons are more likely to demonstrate “classic” symptoms of stress, such as ulcers and hypertension, than their counterparts in finance, supply, etc.

Baron suggests another reason and argues that the basis for this difference is easily discerned; supervisors and managers must often deal with the human costs of their decisions. They must witness the anguish of persons who are fired or passed over for promotion. Similarly, they must witness the reactions of those given negative feedback on their work. Such experiences are often very stressful. As noted by the vice-president of a large company:

“Dollars, stockholders’ dividends, market changes, all those are just numbers. They bother me, sure, but the decisions that eat away at me are the ones that involve people. If I have to lay off the father of a family...or call someone on the carpet, I’m a wreck for days.”

(Baron, Behaviour in organisations, p.283)

In short, it appears that being responsible for other person is often a heavy burden, one that exacts a major toll in terms of job-related stress.

2.2.5.5 Lack of participation

Most people feel they know quite a lot about their jobs and believe they should be consulted about decisions relating to them. When they are not, job satisfaction, and perhaps productivity too, can suffer. Hence, a lack of employee participation in such matters often has another negative effect as well – it can serve as an added source of tension and stress (Margolis, Krose & Quinn, 1974). This seems to be true for two reasons. First, when they are not invited to take part in the decision process, many employees may feel “left out” and similarly to the implications of underutilisation of people as discussed above, this is a threat to their self-esteem. Being “left out” in itself is a negative experience. Baron thinks that because they have no opportunity to influence important events relating to their jobs, such persons may also experience feelings of helplessness or a loss of control. Such reactions often intensify the impact of stressful events (Baron, 1983).

2.2.6 TECHNOLOGICAL CAUSES OF STRESS AT WORK: “ TECHNO-STRESS”

With increasing use of modern technology and the use of computers, a new source of stress has emerged. “Apart from the cyber stress and Internet addiction, in our modern world with its high technology environment, stress is a common response to information overload. It was initially thought that technology would make life easier. Although this might be so, in some cases the opposite is true” (Schlebusch, 2000). Schlebusch argues that work loads have become heavier, deadlines tighter and interpersonal and human contact less which results in more stress, as well as the effect of the knowledge explosion and

increased computerisation which has literally reorganised our social and economic systems. According to him, confusion about ever-new and more complicated technology, the rapid changes that accompany it and the use of computerised equipment can contribute to stress. Indeed, for example, computer terminal workers complain about eye strain, backache, headache, tension, and even decreased mental alertness, and motor car accidents that are increasingly being reported as a result of people using their cell-phones without car kits while simultaneously driving their cars in busy traffic (Schlebusch, 2000).

2.2.7 OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL SOURCES OF STRESS: EVALUATION, WORKING CONDITIONS, AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS.

The factors just described appear to be among the most important as sources of stress within organizations. Organisational structure and general climate plays an important role. Stress can sometimes stem from personal relationships within an organization, e.g. relationship with subordinates, colleagues and superiors. When they are negative, they can elicit considerable amounts of stress, however, on the other hand, when the relationships are cordial and supportive, they can reduce or “buffer” the impact of various sources of stress and exert other beneficial effects. A number of writers (e.g. Argyris, 1964; Cooper and Marshall, 1978) have suggested that good relationships between members of a work group are a central factor in individual and organisational health. French and Caplan (1970) and Kahn *et al.* (1964) carried out studies and they come to roughly the same conclusion that bad relationships, e.g. mistrust of persons worked with, low supportiveness, were positively related to high role ambiguity, inadequate communications between people, psychological strain in the form of low job satisfaction, and to feelings of job-related threat to one's well-being.

Others factors also exist and are worth to be at least briefly mentioned. First, repetitive and monotonous work is a source of stress as there is lack of stimulation and this might also be considered as underutilisation and lack of

participation. Secondly, there is the process of *performance appraisal* or evaluation in the management of human resources. Being evaluated by others is often a stressful experience, especially when the results of such appraisal have important effects upon one's career (Baron, 1983).

2.3 FACTORS OUTSIDE THE WORKPLACE: PERSONAL INFLUENCES ON STRESS

Organizations do not exist in a psychological or social vacuum; the behaviour shown by individuals within them is often strongly affected by events occurring in other contexts.

These stressors will have its physical and psychological consequences on people and their behaviour. These consequences, as mentioned, will vary from person to person. For these reasons, full comprehension of stress and its effect on behaviour requires attention to individual and personal factors affecting this process. There are several of these which have significant impact on behaviour of people and which would manifest themselves at the workplace.

2.3.1 THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Stress outside the workplace is common and growing; various social factors are responsible, such as personal problems or changes in lifestyle. Indeed, environmental factors have become increasingly threatening and uncertain, for example: increased crime, violence and other threats to personal safety; negative peer pressures that lead to substance abuse and other unhealthy life style habits; social isolation and loneliness; the erosion of family and religious values and ties; the loss of other strong sources of social support that are powerful stress busters. These, together with other personal problems, example family problems

contribute to the amount of stress endured by people everyday. Some of the main factors are discussed below.

2.3.1.1 The intrusion of technology in the social environment

As noted earlier, technology has become an integral part in the working life. However, it has also invaded the personal life and "social life". According to Schlebusch (2000), recent research has highlighted the fact that 'techno-stress', as he calls it, contribute to increasing feelings of isolation. As Schlebusch illustrates it, the very technology that is supposed to keep people in close contact with work colleagues, family and friends is replacing vital everyday human interaction. Some studies have shown that heavy use of the Internet can result in an increasing sense of guilt and loneliness because it diminishes social support or interpersonal interaction (Schlebusch, 2000). Research has demonstrated the the benefits of a daily hug, and the fact that a kiss and a cuddle under the right circumstances can be a real elixir of life (Schlebusch, 2000). Unfortunately these are being replaced by electronic communication. Schlebusch argues that despite the benefits of technological communication, the progressive imbalance created between human and electronic communication can create stress-related problems.

Moreover, Internet addiction is another phenomenon which is of concern and which causes stress on the person addicted. Internet addiction has been described in medical journals as a condition that can wreak havoc in relationships and cause physical problems in obsessive users (Schlebusch 2000). Again here, cyber-relationship problems are a new problem and where cyber affairs and on-line friendships replace real-life relationships. Computer/internet addiction includes obsessive on-line trading, gambling, compulsive web surfing or data base searches resulting in information overload; and computer addiction which is associated with obsessive computer use of playing of computer game; those addicted suffer from sleep deprivation, eye-

strain, backache and carpal tunnel syndrome (Schlebusch, 2000). Schlebusch adds that some people use the Internet to escape from psychological problems and stress that are not adequately dealt with, resulting in more stress.

A consequence of this intrusion of technology in social life is that it contributes to the disappearance of sources of social support which is, as mentioned, very important as a buffer against stressors and as a comfort to individuals.

2.3.2 DAILY HASSLES

Researchers have noted more recently that some of the most common sources of stress have their origins from the pressures of daily life – these include the little but numerous daily hassles such as time pressures, paying bills, family conflict, and so on (Schlebusch, 2000). These daily hassles are long-term and therefore, people are subject to these stressors over long period of time and they can be sometimes be more stressful than a single great stressful event (Schlebusch, 2000). However, such hassles will affect each person differently, depending on the perception of these hassles and the coping skills.

2.3.3 PERSONAL STRESSORS AND THE IMPACT OF LIFE CHANGE.

Lazarus and Cohen (1977) called personal stressors those negative life events or traumatic life changes which occur in people's lives. These are such things as the death of a close relative, divorce, loss of job, loss of family estate etc. They represent powerful challenges, and movies, novels, and plays often suggest that there is an important link between changes in one's life – especially traumatic ones – and later personal health. Specifically, they often portray individuals who have experienced stressful events, namely those mentioned above, as "pinning away" until they become seriously ill and expire. Clearly, this suggestion of a link between stressful life events and health is intriguing. But does it have any basis

in fact? The answer appears to be yes. Many investigations conducted during the past fifteen years suggest that this particular Hollywood or Broadway theme contains a substantial grain of truth. When individuals undergo extremely stressful changes in their lives, their personal health does often suffer.

The initial work on this intriguing relationship was conducted during the 1960s by Holmes and Rahe. These investigators asked a large group of subjects to rate numerous life events in terms of the amount of change they produced. On the basis of these data, they then prepared a *Schedule of Recent Life Events*, in which the amount of change associated with each entry is represented by a numerical value. *It was found that the largest amount of change/stress is linked to the death of a spouse, followed by divorce and marital separation.* In contrast, relatively low levels of change/stress are associated with vacations or minor violations of the law (e.g. traffic ticket). In a systematic research using a questionnaire, Holmes and Rahe (1960), then obtained evidence for a link between the occurrence of stressful life events and later illness.

Subsequent research on the impact of stressful life events upon personal health has generally confirmed these initial findings, but this relationship has only been weak: the fact that many persons exposed to highly stressful life changes do not always become ill as opposed to what has been suggested by Holmes and Rahe above. That is, some people remain unaffected or are less affected by the harmful effects often induced by such experiences. This fact thus raises an intriguing question: what is it about those individuals who are not affected by the same events that enables them to cope with traumatic events? In short, what traits or characteristics help them to remain healthy or have lower vulnerability in the face of extreme stress?

Researches and theorists have provided explanation through people's personal vulnerabilities, their appraisal of stress, and their perception of the control they have and thus how they cope with stress. These are further explained below.

2.3.4 VULNERABILITY : APPRAISAL AND COPING

Exploring the factors and events which cause stress can lead us to believe that stress is an objective characteristic of the environment. As we have seen in the person-environment fit theory, it is not. The effects of stress indeed vary greatly which makes some people more vulnerable than others. What can be stressful to one might not appear stressful to the same degree for another. The effects of potential stressors will therefore vary depending of the different thresholds that people have to stress. But what determines these different thresholds? Studies suggest that they are determined by the vulnerability of people and their personality predispositions to stress. Traits and characteristics of people therefore influence how they would appraise their stressors or their environment and situation, and how they would cope with them (Cary Cooper, 1992).

2.3.4.1 Stress and cognitive appraisal: Stress – largely – is where we perceive it.

Stress, like beauty, lies in the eyes of the beholder (Douglas Carroll, 1992). The point is well illustrated in the research and writings of Richard Lazarus and his colleagues (1966). For us to experience an event or situation as stressful, according to Lazarus (1966), we have to perceive or appraise it as such. Other appraisals, i.e., non-threatening appraisals, would serve to diminish the disruptive impact of the event, short-circuit the stress.

The amount of stress individuals experience in a given situation is not determined solely by the objective conditions it involves. Rather, it is also strongly affected by cognitive appraisal of these conditions. In short, stress occurs only to the degree that the persons involved in a situation perceive it to be harmful, threatening, or challenging. If, in contrast, they do not view the situation as possessing these characteristics, stress will not occur – even if objective stress – inducing conditions actually exist. Perhaps the crucial role of such

cognitive appraisals is most readily visible in situations in which they are somehow “out of phase” with reality. For example, consider the events that occur in theatre, nightclubs, and similar settings when one or more persons suddenly – and falsely – perceive the presence of danger (e.g. fire). Here, panic may ensue, with the result that hundreds or even thousands are injured, despite the total absence of any real threat. Conversely, individuals can often suffer serious harm when they fail to recognise a real and imminent danger, and so take no steps to avoid it. These and related incidents serve to underscore *the fact that our response to various stressors is strongly shaped by our appraisal of their nature* (Douglas Carroll, 1992).

The process through which we appraise or evaluate potential sources of stress is affected by many variables, including our past experience with stressors, our attitudes about them, and several of our personal traits. Thus, full comprehension of this important process cannot rest solely on knowledge of the external factors that induce it. Rather, we must also know something about individuals and about the manner in which they perceive the world around them.

This theory has similar foundation to the P-E fit theory. Both theories suggest that the subjective appraisal of the environment (or the subjective environment) will determine the degree of stress of situations.

2.3.4.2 Vulnerability and coping strategies.

Particular appraisal can ameliorate the impact of a potentially stressful event. There are psychological mechanisms at our disposal which may serve to combat stress. The existence of such devices has been recognised for some time. Freud referred to them as defence mechanisms, although today they are generally called coping strategies, and, to an extent, they help us explain why, in the face of a potentially stressful situation, some people yield but others do not. Part of the explanation is that *some individuals have a fuller repertoire of positive*

psychological coping strategies. There is now substantial evidence, for example, that individuals vary markedly in the physiological reaction they show to stress. Vulnerability to stress is influenced by both the physiological and psychological reactions to stress as people vary in the stock of coping strategies they can tap at a physiological and psychological level.

Kobasa (1979) reasoned that people who experience stressful life events without falling ill may *differ, in terms of personality*, from persons who do succumb to such stress. In particular, she reasoned that “stress-resistant” persons may possess three characteristics to a greater degree than those who are “stress-vulnerable”.

First, they may believe *more strongly that they can exert control over the events* they encounter. Second, *they may be more deeply committed to the activities in their lives*. And third, *they may react more favourably to change, viewing it as an exciting challenge rather than as a source of threat*.

In order to examine these suggestions, Kobasa (1979) administered several questionnaires to all of the middle- and upper-level executives of a large public utility. One of the questionnaires was the Schedule of Recent Life Events developed by Holmes and Rahe (1960s), another was designed to obtain information on any illnesses subjects had recently experienced. Additional questionnaires assessed the three personality factors previously listed – belief in personal control, commitment to one’s activities, and reactions to change. On the basis of responses to all of these scales, Kobasa (1979) established two key groups of subjects: one consisting of persons who had experienced a great deal of stress but had not become ill, and another consisting of persons who had experienced a similar level of stress and had succumbed to serious illness. It was predicted that these two groups would differ sharply with respect to the three personality characteristics of control, commitment, and challenge. The results confirmed the predictions. *Persons who remained healthy in the face of stressful*

life events did express a greater sense of control, greater commitment to life activities, and more positive feelings about change than those who became ill after such events. We should add that in another, related investigation, Kobasa and her colleagues have studied a large group of managers for several years. The results of this long-term project can be readily summarised: the greater the degree to which the individuals involved possessed the traits described above, the smaller the negative impact of stressful life events upon their personal health. Together these findings point to the conclusion that there are important individual differences in reaction to such events. While some persons are highly vulnerable to this form of stress, others are relatively resistant to it. And these differences, in turn, seem to reflect important underlying aspects of personality.

These different personalities can be classified into Type A and Type B. Briefly, A's seem to react more strongly to stressful conditions than B's. For example, when exposed to stress-inducing events, their heart rate and blood pressure increase to a greater degree than that of B's. Hence, A's and B's differ in other aspects of their reactions to stress. For example, some people have hardy personalities. They tend to have a strong sense of challenge and control and their hardiness helps them to reduce stress. On the other hand, some people are always in a state of stress and can always find something to worry about.

In particular, recent evidence suggests that A's may be more likely to "give up" and feel helpless when confronted with certain types of stress than B's. And this, in turn, may lead them to demonstrate poorer and less adaptive behaviour strategies than B's. Direct evidence for the presence of such differences has been found by Brunson and Matthews, where Type A's and Type B's reacted differently when confronted with an insoluble problem. A's adopted less effective problem-solving strategies, that is, they shifted from ones that could potentially yield a solution (assuming one existed), to strategies that could never yield a solution, even if the problem were actually solvable. In contrast, Type B's showed less tendency to move in this inefficient direction. Further, the verbal comments

made by Type A individuals suggested that they often blamed themselves for their failure on the insoluble problems. B's, in contrast, tended to blame the difficulty of the task or bad luck for their negative results. In summary, existing evidence suggests that Type A persons react more strongly to stress than Type B's. As a result, they may often seriously damage their own health. Further, when they encounter stress, Type A's seems to respond less adaptively to it. And then, to make matters worse, they often blame themselves even for negative outcomes they have not produced. Type B's in contrast, react with more effective behaviour strategies and show less tendencies to shoulder blame or responsibility that is not really theirs. Given these differences, it is little wonder that relatively few top-level managers are Type A's. On the one hand, they don't often survive long enough to rise to the highest ranks; on the other, if they do, they fail to handle as well as B's the stress so common at these heights. This is not to say that Type A's are always at a disadvantage. Competitiveness and achievement-striving do often yield positive results. Type B, on the other hand, is less intense and has a more slow-moving and easy-going manner and is generally more relaxed.

Some people's personality includes high degree of hostility and anger. These people are chronically suspicious and mistrustful of others. According to Stephen Robbins (2001), evidence indicates that this hostility significantly increases a person's stress and risk for heart disease. More specifically, people who are quick to anger, maintain a persistently hostile outlook, and project a cynical mistrust of others are more likely to experience stress situations.

2.3.5 SOCIAL INFLUENCE ON VULNERABILITY

Individuals may be rendered vulnerable to stress at a social level. Social support serves as a buffer alleviating and countering the worst ravages of stress. There is increasing evidence that social support – for example, collegial relationships with co-workers or supervisors – can buffer the impact of stress: the reason for this is that social support acts as a palliative, mitigating the negative effects of high-

strain jobs (Stephen Robbins, 2001). In brief and in any situation even outside the workplace, social support refers to the provision of comfort, caring, esteem, or help by other people or social groups. Those without such facility, without a close relationship, or a supportive social network, would seem to be at a particular risk as a result. In a study, an intimate and confiding friendship was observed to serve a protective function, reducing vulnerability to stress, decreasing the likelihood that stress would have serious deleterious effects on mental well-being.

In summary, how psychological stress affects us depends on our vulnerability and the resources we have at our disposal to combat stress. Vulnerability would appear to operate at a number of levels: biological, psychological, and social.

2.3.6 LOCUS OF CONTROL (PERCEIVED CONTROL) AND REACTIONS TO STRESS.

Locus of control is a personality attribute; people who have high locus of control (known as *Internals*) are those who feel that they can readily affect such events and shape their own destinies; others (known as *Externals*) generally feel that their fates are determined by events and forces beyond their control. As already discussed above in personality traits, perception of control indeed influences how people are affected by stress. There is evidence that the perception of that one is in control of potentially stressful events reduces their impact (e.g., Glass and Singer, 1972). Individuals differ greatly in terms of their beliefs about their ability to control the world around them. If feelings of control actually play a key part in determining reactions to stress, it seems reasonable to expect that Internals and Externals will differ greatly in this respect. And in fact, this seems to be true. For example, Internals generally describe their jobs as less stressful than Externals. They also report lower levels of stress in many organisational settings than do Externals. In sum, a sense of personal control over stressful events can strongly affect reactions to such conditions.

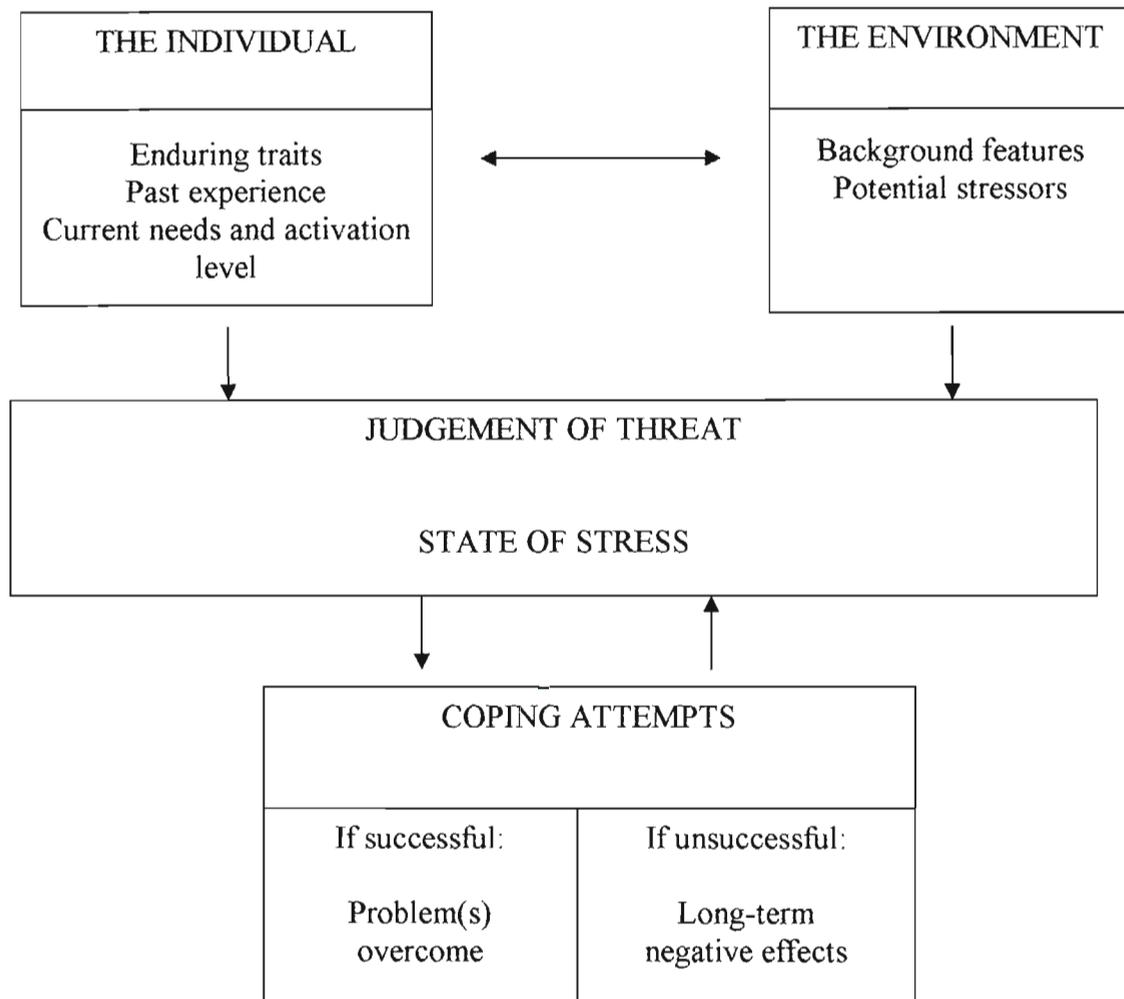
For example, Alfredsson et al. (1985) conducted an analysis of deaths from heart disease across all occupational groups in Sweden. Occupations were classified in terms of high and low demand, and also as high and low in terms of the control over the work environment they afforded employees. Deaths from heart disease were found to be far more common among groups of workers who had the least control over what they did at work and when they did it, and who, at the same time, were in occupations with the highest demands.

2.4 SUMMARY OF THE STRESS PROCESS

Most of the theories agree that the stress process depend both on the environmental stressors, and the individuals' predisposition to stress. How people perceive the stressors depends on various factors, such as their personality traits and characteristics, their age, phase of life, past experiences, their needs and health, to mention a few. In the diagram below, an example of an illustration is given by Cary Cooper (1987). It can be seen that a particular type of person under pressure from certain kinds of environmental stressors can find himself in a stress state. Whether or not a person will be able to cope will depend on his perception of threat or stimuli, his coping capacities, the strength of the stressors and other factors such as his physical and psychological health at the time of the person-environment interaction (Cary Cooper, 1987). Carruthers (1976) brings further this point and includes the probable combined contribution of diet, physical condition, job stressors, and smoking to coronary heart disease in air traffic controllers. The causes of stress are therefore multifactorial and interactive and attention must be drawn to the potential environmental stressors and important personality predispositions (Cary Cooper, 1987).

Fig. 2.4 The stress reaction as a function of both person and environment

Source: *Psychology at Work*, Peter Warr, 1987, 2nd ed.



2.5 STRESS AND SOME IMPORTANT EFFECTS ON BEHAVIOUR

The consequences of stress undoubtedly have an effect on behaviour. People's mind is disturbed and this will have an influence on their attitudes and behaviour. These changes in attitudes can be seen through the physiological, psychological and behavioural consequences of stress. The link between stress and particular physiological symptoms is not clear, attributed to the complexity of the symptoms and the difficulty of objectively measuring them. But of greater relevance to this dissertation are the psychological effects and behavioural effects: our main concern is with the behaviours and the attitudes. Specific examples are given and explained below.

2.5.1 THE PHYSICAL IMPACT OF STRESS

Evidence gathered in recent years suggests that prolonged exposure to stressful conditions can produce serious disturbances in our basic bodily processes. We have already touched on evidence linking stress with heart disease. High levels of stress are also linked to other negative effects: high blood pressure, high pulse rates, increased cholesterol levels, abnormalities in the electrical activity of the heart, peptic ulcers, and high levels of uric acid in the blood (a condition linked to gout and other ailments) (Beegm T.A., & Newman, J.E. 1978). Stress can give rise to other physical disturbances (e.g. those describe in the questionnaire in chapter 3). It is not entirely clear that stress actually causes all these changes. The possibility exists that it merely accompanies them, and that both stress and these symptoms are produced by some other factor. Taking all available evidence into account, though, it seems reasonable to conclude that prolonged exposure to high levels of stress can result in physical changes that threaten our health and well-being.

2.5.2 THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF STRESS AND THE IMPACT ON BEHAVIOUR

From the preceding discussion on vulnerability, it is clear that behaviour is influenced by stress and how we conduct ourselves has important consequences for health and well-being. Eric Sundstrom (1986), suggests that the influences of the environment at the individual level of analysis are psychological responses evoked under a variety of conditions, perhaps the simplest, involves is the individual's attitude concerning the environment, which includes an evaluative judgement as well as certain beliefs. These will determine the behavioural responses.

The psychological impact of stress ranges from anxiety, depression, decrease in job satisfaction, sleeping disorders and many other symptoms (see section 2.1.3) including those of burnout. These have important effects on behaviour.

2.5.2.1 Attitudes and Behaviour

Attitudes are enduring systems of positive or negative evaluations, emotional feelings, and action tendencies with respect to an individual's environment (Krech, Crutchfield & Ballchey, 1962). Thus, when appraising a particular situation/environment and that situation/environment appears stressful, it would be reasonable to say that the person is having a particular attitude with respect to his/her environment.

Definitions of 'attitude' have usually included the notion of a disposition or a readiness to act in certain ways (e.g. Allport, 1954). Behaviour are those actions of people that can be observed. An enduring issue in social science is whether individuals' attitudes predict their subsequent behaviour (Erich, 1969; Tartar, 1970). Indeed, attitudes have shown in studies to be a good predictor of behaviour; our issue here is, if attitude causes behaviour, then any attitude which

is caused by stressed will affect behaviour to some extent. Moreover, behavioural scientists now are convinced that mind and body are linked.

As we have seen, stress is an extremely common aspect of life in organisations. At this point, therefore, it is important to see the specific effects resulting from exposure to stressful conditions. Stress, as will be discussed below, actually exerts a powerful and far-reaching impact upon human beings. In fact, it is now known to influence our physical functioning, our psychological states, and several key forms of work-related behaviour.

Most behavioural scientists now believe that mind and body are intimately linked. That is, events and conditions affecting one often affect the other as well. Given this basic view, it is not surprising to learn that as stress affects our basic bodily processes, it also influences our internal psychological state (Baron, 1993). A number of such effects have been uncovered in recent studies. First, as expected, exposure to stress often induces negative changes in mood and emotional state. Persons experiencing it frequently report such feelings as anxiety, depression, fatigue, and irritation. Second, exposure to stress – especially stress relating to one's job – may result in *lowered self-esteem* (McGrath, J.E., 1976). Such effects may arise in the following manner. Individuals exposed to intense and prolonged job stress often feel that they cannot cope with the demands of their position. At the same time, these persons generally believe that such coping is essential. Indeed they may feel that the ability to handle one's job is closely linked to competence and self-worth. This gap between the way they feel things *should be* and current reality may produce a downward shift in self-esteem.

As a result, stress can increase the incidence of unhealthy behaviours such as cigarette smoking and excessive alcohol consumption. Here behaviour increases our exposure to chemical toxins. In addition, as discussed above through the different personality traits, (e.g Type A behaviours), in the face of stress, we

adopt characteristics of behavioural strategies and not all of these strategies offer effective protection. Indeed, certain of them may render us especially vulnerable.

It has been found in a research by Nichols, 1962, people who have subjected to long exposure of stressful conditions such as loud and irritating noise seem less willing to offer help to a stranger in need of their assistance than individuals not exposed to this kind of stress. Secondly, from a research undertaken by Rogers, 1976, it was found that exposure to stressful circumstances may often reduce people's later sensitivity to other persons. These social aftereffects have potentially serious consequences.

2.5.2.2 THE IMPACT OF STRESS ON ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

Stress affects people and people are an integral part of organisations and their most important asset. It is therefore natural that the implications and consequences of stress for organisations be highlighted. In studying the link between the attitudes caused by stress and the actions (behaviour), we clearly need to be able to measure appropriate form of behaviour. The most common behavioural measures in the occupational field are work performance, absenteeism and labour turnover (Peter Warr, 1981). These, therefore, need to be highlighted as the consequences of stress. Others include, productivity and performance, initiative and innovation which are all behaviours of the effects of stress.

Perhaps the best known and most influential research project concerning psychology with the environment of the workplace is the Hawthorne experiment. This is an evidence of the link between psychological effects and behaviour at work. The experiment attempted to show a relationship between the effect and lightning and performance. However, the failure of the Hawthorne studies to find effects of lightning widened the focus of industrial psychology to include employees' attitudes, interpersonal relationships, and groups. The experiments

also demonstrated the importance of the relationship between employee and supervisor and attitudes about other characteristics of jobs (Eric Sundstrom, 1986).

Hackman and Oldham (1976) have developed what they term the 'Job Characteristics Model'. This makes specific predictions about the main features of jobs which affect their incumbents' attitudes and behaviour, especially regarding our concern in this dissertation.

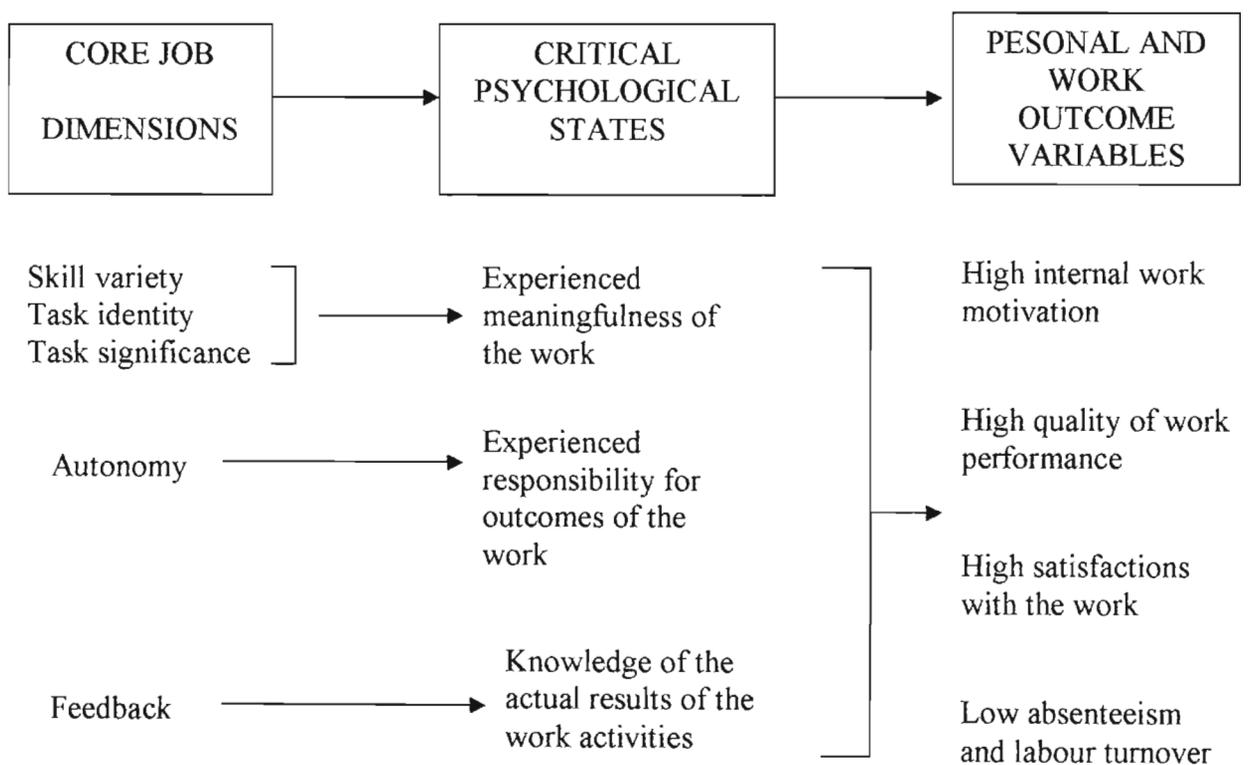


Fig 2.5 The Job Characteristic Model (Hackman and Oldham, 1976)

Source : *Psychology at Work* , Peter Warr, pp.268, 2nd ed.

The model identifies five salient features of a job (collectively called *Core Job dimensions*):

Skill variety: the number of different activities which the job requires.

Task identity: the degree to which a 'whole' and identifiable piece of work is involved.

Task significance: the job's impact on the lives of others

Autonomy: the degree of freedom, independence and discretion which the job allows the individual.

Feedback: the extent to which the job provides clear and direct information for the individual to assess his/her own performance.

Jobs higher on these job characteristics are predicted to create greater satisfaction, higher work motivation, better work performance and lower levels of absence and labour turnover (effects collectively called *Outcome Variables*). It is hypothesised that these effects are achieved by enhancing the meaningfulness, responsibility and knowledge of results experienced by the job holder (intermediate conditions described as *Critical Psychological states*) (Toby Wall, 1978). Studies testing the Job Characteristics Model have supported some of its predictions (The Job Diagnostic Survey, Hackman and Oldham, 1975), Brief and Aldag (1975), Umstot, Bell and Mitchell (1976) found that the Core Job Dimensions were positively associated with job satisfaction and work motivation.

2.5.2.3 Stress and job satisfaction

Perhaps the most important psychological consequence of stress (for businesses) is that stress is often associated with reductions in job satisfaction (McLean, 1980). Job dissatisfaction, in fact, is "the simplest and most obvious psychological effect" of stress. But stress shows itself in other psychological states – for example, tension, anxiety, irritability, boredom, and procrastination (Stephen Robbins, 2001).

The term job satisfaction refers simply to the individual's satisfaction with the job, all things considered. One impetus for studying job satisfaction was the long-standing idea that a comfortable or satisfied worker perform best on the job (Eric Sundstrom, 1986). Job satisfaction represents the individual attitude toward the job. As an attitude, job satisfaction is a summary evaluative judgment that reflects the individual's past and present experience, including experience with the physical environment. Job satisfaction is of importance here, because it is an attitude which will eventually determine behaviours such as absenteeism, turnover and work performance as will be explained below.

2.5.2.4 Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs and Herzberg theory of hygiene factor.

According to Maslow's and Herzberg's theories, the workplace only becomes salient for job satisfaction when it becomes inadequate. Maslow's theory suggests that each person has an ordered hierarchy of needs, the most potent of which are basic physiological needs. Once these are met, next comes safety and security. Once the need for a secure environment is satisfied, it loses its motivational force, and the next step would be the needs for belongingness or for satisfying social relationships. Finally come needs for status and recognition.

Following the theory, the physical setting would be perceived as most important when it is least satisfactory, that is when it threatens or fails to meet basic needs. If those needs are not met, job satisfaction will suffer. However, the implication is that, people in adequate work environment take it for granted and only pay attention to it when it fails to meet their basic needs, therefore, workers could be underestimating the extent to which adequate physical environment contributes to their satisfaction (Sundstrom, 1986). Likewise, Herzberg's theory takes work environment a factor which determines motivation and hence will affect job satisfaction. The physical working environment is a hygiene factor, when not

adequate, will be the cause of dissatisfaction, but when present is taken for granted and be subject to indifference (Sundstrom, 1986).

The theories could be brought further, and including the general climate working environment and not limited to the physical environment. As discussed earlier, evidence indicates that when people are placed in jobs that make multiple and conflicting demands or in which there is a lack of clarity as to the incumbent's duties, authority, and responsibilities, both stress and dissatisfaction are increased. Similarly, less control people have over the pace and involvement in their work, the greater the stress and dissatisfaction. While more research is needed to clarify the relationship, the evidence suggests that jobs that provide a low level of variety, significance, autonomy, feedback, and identity to incumbents create stress and reduce satisfaction and involvement in the job (Stephen Robbins, 2001).

An individual's satisfaction with the job is important in its own right, but it is critical to organisational effectiveness because of it determines to a large extent to rates of absence from work and rates of turnover (Davis, 1977). In other words, in organisations where people experience a high level of satisfaction with their jobs, the evidence suggests that they tend to stay with their organisations and come to work regularly (Sundstrom, 1986).

Considering the negative and unpleasant nature of intense stress, such effects are far from unexpected. In any case, given the important links between job satisfaction and key forms of organisational behaviour, it is clear that the impact of stress upon such feelings has important implications no manager should ignore.

2.5.2.3 People are assets

People are an organisation's key resources. People are the most important assets; organisations consists mainly of peoplem so its effectiveness ultimately depends on their efforts as individuals (Sundstrom, 1986). Moreover, people can give a competitive advantage over rivals, because people's skills, talents and special attributes cannot be copied by rivals. Therefore, in order to retain and optimise the valuable assets, their general attitudes and morale must be at their peak in order for them to be motivated and perform at their best. Unpleasant working conditions or other personal problems might demotivate or distract them from performing efficiently at work.

Working conditions can act as stressors on people, affecting their attitudes and morale and consequently their performance at work. When we go back in history at the industrial revolution, the idea that a comfortable worker does better work grew out of the analogy of the worker to the machine, which at the time was taken quite literally (Eric Sundstrom, *Workplaces*, pp. 23):

It is only where high spirits and enthusiasm enter the human machine that, like a well-oiled engine, all parts work smoothly and produce the greatest effect with less friction (Meakin, 1905, p.203).

Another writer expressed the same view:

The nearer we approach the 100 percent mark in ideal conditions for our people, the nearer they will approach the 100 percent mark of efficiency (Dempsey, 1914, p.496).

2.5.2.4 Stress and work performance

As discussed above, any factor that exerts powerful effects upon basic bodily processes and internal psychological states would normally also be expected to affect overt behaviour. With respect to stress, this is definitely the case. A considerable body of research findings point to the conclusion that exposure to strong and continued stress exerts significant effects upon several types of organisational behaviour.

First, and perhaps most important stress affects the *performance* of many different tasks. It was once widely assumed that the relation between stress and job performance took the form of an inverted letter U or an inverted letter J. that is, at low levels of stress, performance actually improves (relative to no stress) because of the heightened arousal or activation generated. At higher levels of stress, however, negative effects (such as exhaustion or feelings of dissatisfaction) come into play, with the result that performance begins to decline. And at very high levels of stress such effects become dominant, and performance drops very sharply (Baron, 1983).

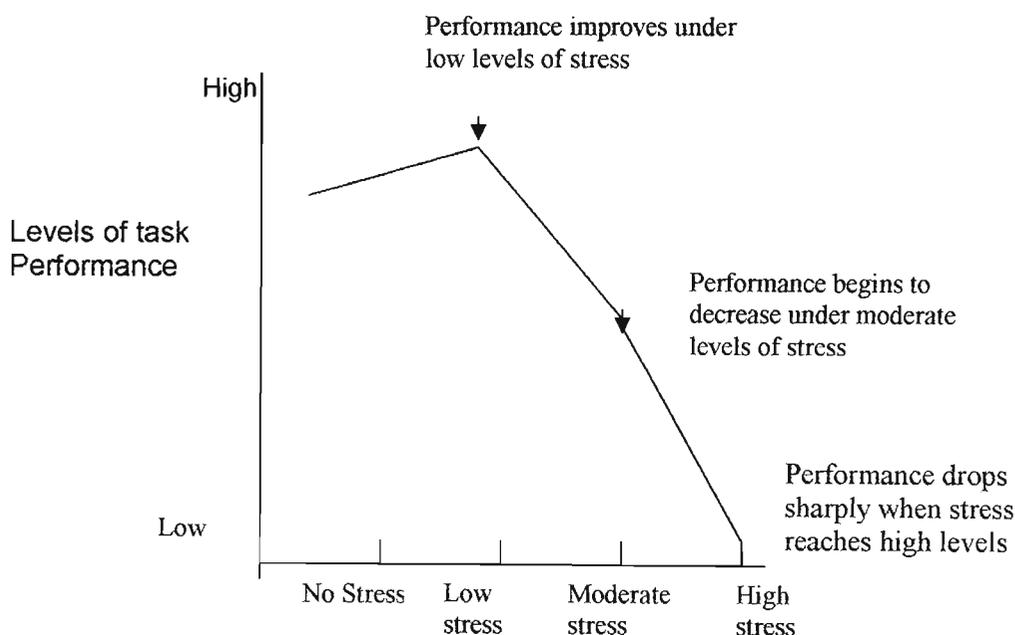


Fig 2.6 Stress and Task Performance: An earlier view.
Source: R. Baron, *Organisational Behaviour*, 1983, p.295

However, recent findings suggest that, in reality, the relationship between stress and performance is considerably more complex. First, it is strongly affected by the level of difficulty of the task being performed. And as noted recently by Beehr and Newman, its precise form probably varies with the specific stressor involved, the type of performance being measured, and several other personal and situational variables. In view of this more recent evidence, we cannot unfortunately provide a simple description of the overall relation between stress and task performance. Indeed, no single description of this relationship may be possible. We can, however, offer two general conclusions: (1) the performance of many tasks is in fact strongly affected by stress, and (2) such performance usually drops off sharply when stress rises to high levels.

In addition to task performance, stress also affects several other aspects of organisational behaviour. For example, it is at least modestly related to absenteeism and turnover (Steers, R.M. & Rhodes, S.R. 1979). This is hardly surprising. After all, when individuals find a job highly stressful, they may well seek to avoid it, at least as much as possible. Again, we can see that stress induces unhealthy behaviours: there is some indication that high levels of job stress are linked to alcoholism and drug abuse on the one hand and to aggression and industrial sabotage on the other. The fact that individuals sometimes attempt to cope with stress through the use of drugs accounts for the first of these findings. And the second is consistent with research suggesting that anger and aggression often follow exposure to certain stressors (e.g., intense heat, loud noise, crowding) as already mentioned above.

The costs of stress to organisations can be very significant, assessed by absenteeism, reduced productivity, compensation claims, health insurance and direct medical expenses.

2.5.2.5 Stressors Reducing Innovation and Personal Initiative

Farr and Ford (1990), suggests that stressors can be a hindrance to innovation and initiative, action arrow (a) in figure below. In today’s world of rapid changing environment and intense competition, this would be clearly a handicap. Generally, acts of innovation and initiative aim at improving work processes and procedures or preparing for future problems or demands. Thus, before innovation or initiative is started, opportunities for such actions have to be identified. Spotting these opportunities, for example by anticipating future circumstances, happens presumably in the course of long-term planning and of scanning process. In the presence of certain degree of stressors, all of the limited regulation capacity is needed to accomplish the task requirements and to deal with the stressors. This diminishes scanning and long-term planning (Frese and Zapf, 1994).

Farr and Ford (1990) pointed out that stressful work situations can impede role innovation. They argued that an organisation must provide some ‘slack’ that allows an individual to think about the future. In situations of extreme workload in which one is only *re-acting* on immediate requests no time and possibilities are left for innovative, long-term thinking.

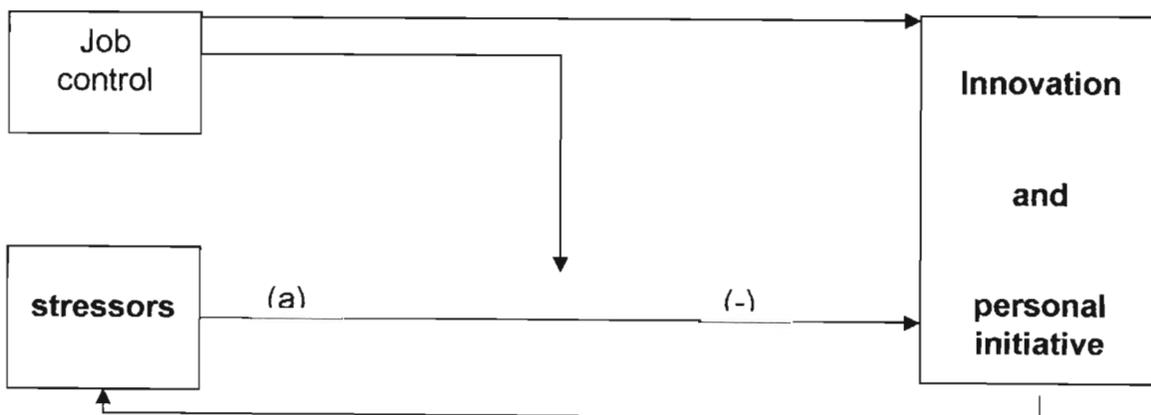


Fig 2.7 Stressors as a hindrance to innovation and personal initiative and the reverse effect of innovation and personal initiative on stressors (Doris Fay, Sabine Sonnentag and Michael Frese)

West and Altink (1996) described 'psychological safety' as an important prerequisite of individual innovation. They argue that in work situations in which employees feel unsafe, insecure, and threatened, innovation will be less likely to occur. Stressors might contribute to such unfavourable feelings; therefore, they can be seen as indirect barriers to innovation.

Thus one mechanism suggests that stressors reduce the likelihood of identifying opportunities for innovation and initiative, thereby impeding these actions.

2.5.2.6 Positive behaviours of stress

We should, however, note that while most effects of stress upon organisational behaviour are negative, there are some positive behaviour where attention should be drawn: in circumstances where pressure arises when an individual is expected to perform in a particular manner and finds it a source of discomfort and anxiety, at the same time the individual finds the experience a source of excitement, challenge, and personal growth. It could be said that when under some pressure – mild levels of stimulation – people function better because they are more aware, more attentive, clearer in their thinking, and physically alert (Eugene McKenna, 1994). This is seen as a healthy form of stress. Indeed, the results of a recent study by Weiss, Ilgen, and Sharbaugh suggest that work-related stress (e.g. being transferred involuntarily, getting a new boss) can encourage individuals to engage in increased information search with respect to their jobs (Weiss, H.M., Ilgen, D.R., & Sharbaugh, M.E. 1982). That is such conditions may encourage them to re-examine their typical patterns of work behaviour, to seek more input from co-workers, and so on. Such actions, in turn, can yield many positive results. For example, they may assist individuals (and organisations) in altering outmoded patterns of behaviour – a key step in adapting to new environmental conditions. In such cases, the impact of stress can be quite beneficial.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Anybody can get stressed, it has nothing to do with weakness, but everybody has a different threshold at which they become stressed. Stress is an interaction between the person and the environment. Stress can be either a positive or negative influence on employee performance. For many people, low to moderate amounts of stress enable them to perform their jobs better, by increasing their work intensity, alertness, and ability to react (Stephen Robbins, 2001). At high levels of stress, or even a moderate level sustained over a long period of time, eventually causes decline in performance, and stress will exert largely negative effects upon people's behaviour.

At high level of stress or prolonged exposure to stress, people are affected at the physiological and physical level, psychological and social level. Stress is about too many demands and a lack of control but it also depends on how the person perceives the situation. Stress is affecting more and more people nowadays and has become an epidemic, due to longer working hours, hectic lifestyle and uncertainty in the environment around them. The consequence is less healthy individuals which are suffering from numerous diseases and decreased performance at work and increased costs associated with stress for organisations. It is a growing concern and both companies and individuals must reduce stress factors as well as trying to cope with it through different methods and techniques available.

Stressors inside and outside the workplace therefore indirectly (through physical and psychological effects) or directly (through direct coping behaviours) affect people's behaviour. These behaviours can also take place at work and for this reason, it is often useful for managers to devote careful attention to the task of reducing its presence both for themselves and their employees.

Individuals have their share of responsibilities as well, since stress is sometimes unavoidable and which also originates outside the workplace but which result in behaviours manifesting itself at the workplace. There are several techniques which have been developed for stress management. This can help people better cope with stress and alleviate the problems associate with stress. These will be mentioned in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 3

QUESTIONNAIRE AND SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is both quantitative and qualitative. A sample of 50 employees of the airline industry were administered a questionnaire on stress and 34 out of the 50 employees responded. The respondents are from the five airline companies operating at the Durban International Airport and from the Airport Company of South Africa (ACSA). The questionnaire intends to measure the stress levels of the employees in this industry. The data acquired from the questionnaires have been illustrated in the form of the frequencies and percentages obtained for the different answers. This has been achieved with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

- **Section 1** deals with the potential stressors that might exist in the employees' environment.
- **Section 2** deals with the personality and coping abilities of individuals to determine how well they are currently coping with common sources of stress; this is to determine to what extent the potential stressors mentioned in section 1 could or are actually having an impact on the employees.
- **Section 3** gives a list of the various signs and symptoms of stress: physiological, psychological and behavioural (coping behaviours) to see how far employees are suffering from stress.

3.2 SURVEY RESULTS

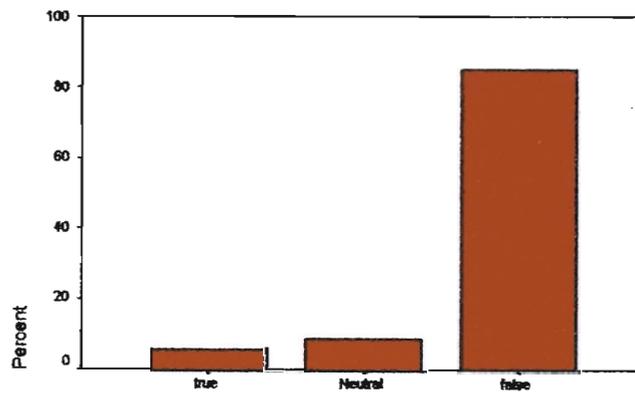
Section 1

Q 1.1: I would describe the workplace environment as unpleasant in general

Q1.1

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid true	2	5.9	5.9	5.9
Neutral	3	8.8	8.8	14.7
false	29	85.3	85.3	100.0
Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.1



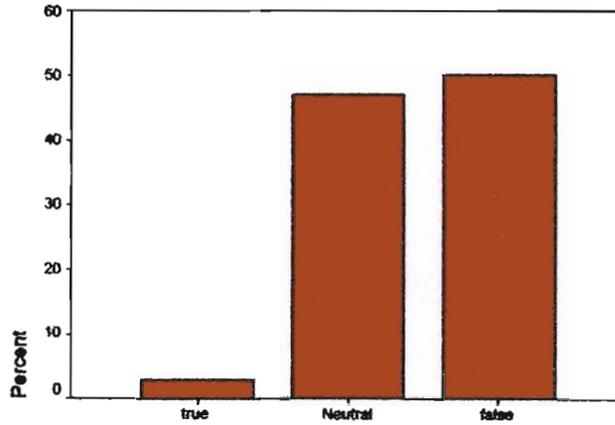
Q1.1

Q1.2 : The airport is always too crowded and/or there is too much noise to cope with

Q1.2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Neutral	18	47.1	47.1	50.0
	false	17	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.2



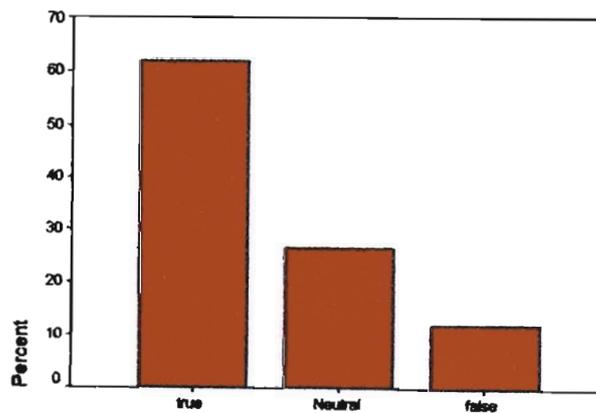
Q1.2

Q1.3 : Customers/Passengers can often be very difficult

Q1.3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	21	61.8	61.8	61.8
	Neutral	9	26.5	26.5	88.2
	false	4	11.8	11.8	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.3



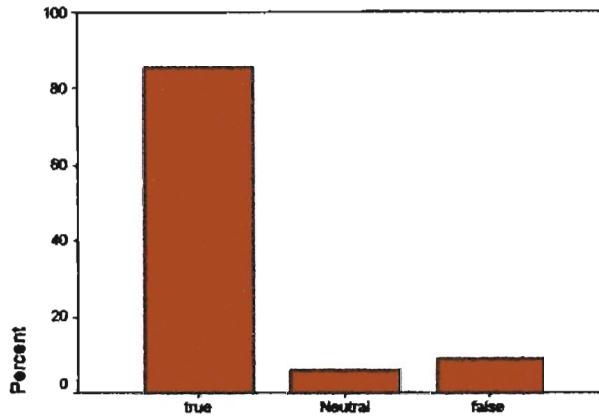
Q1.3

Q1.4 : The job requires a lot of patience

Q1.4

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid true	29	85.3	85.3	85.3
Neutral	2	5.9	5.9	91.2
false	3	8.8	8.8	100.0
Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.4



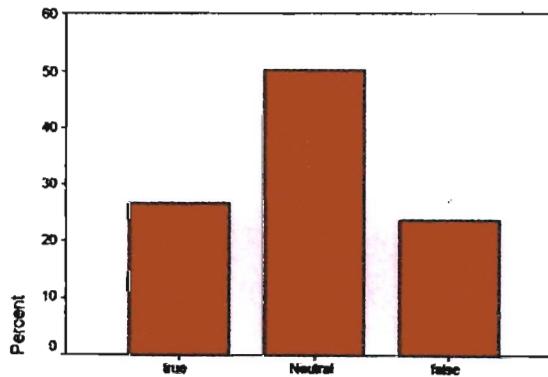
Q1.4

Q 1.5 : There is often a lack of efficient communication to carry out the job effectively

Q1.5

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid true	9	26.5	26.5	26.5
Neutral	17	50.0	50.0	76.5
false	8	23.5	23.5	100.0
Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.5



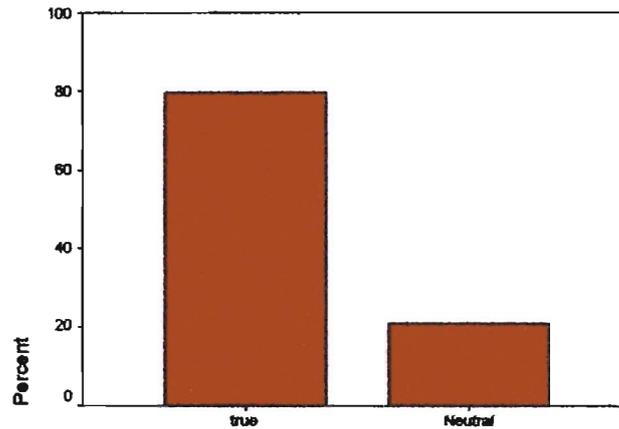
Q1.5

Q1.6 Colleagues and/or superiors / subordinates are generally helpful and cooperative

Q1.6

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	27	79.4	79.4	79.4
	Neutral	7	20.6	20.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.6



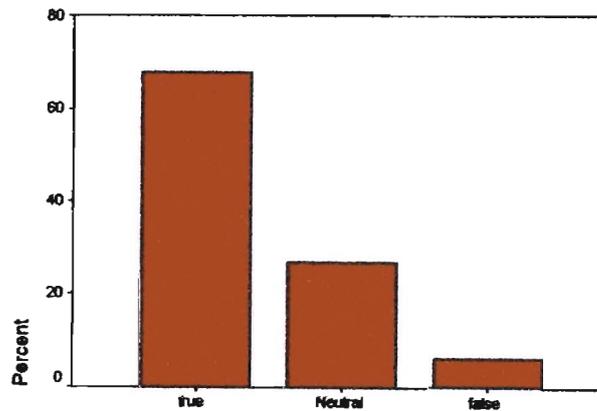
Q1.6

Q1.7: There is a lot of pressure at work in different aspects

Q1.7

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	23	67.6	67.6	67.6
	Neutral	9	26.5	26.5	94.1
	false	2	5.9	5.9	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.7



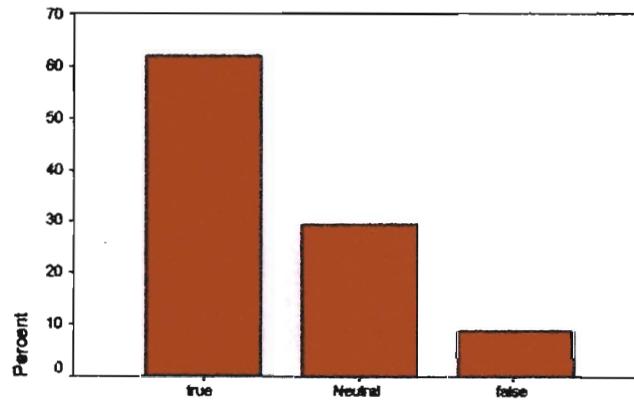
Q1.7

Q 1.8 : There is enough support from superiors/subordinates/colleagues

Q1.8

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	21	61.8	61.8	61.8
	Neutral	10	29.4	29.4	91.2
	false	3	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.8



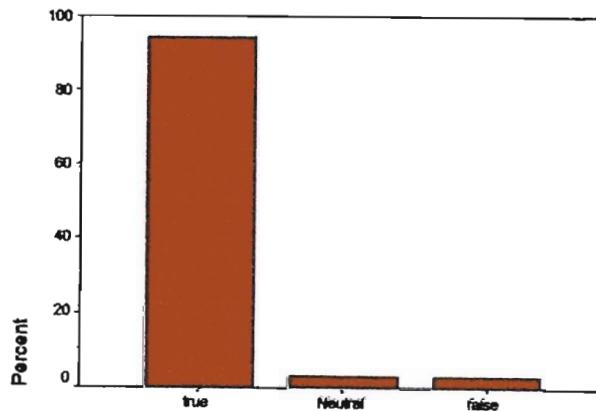
Q1.8

Q1.9 : My job involves high interaction with people

Q1.9

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	31	91.2	93.9	93.9
	Neutral	1	2.9	3.0	97.0
	false	1	2.9	3.0	100.0
	Total	33	97.1	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.9		
Total		34	100.0		

Q1.9



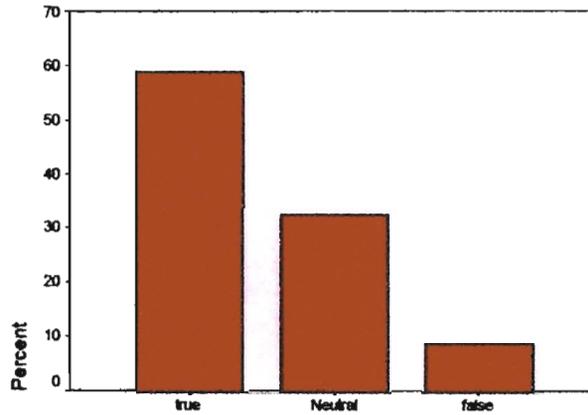
Q1.9

Q 1.10 : The job I do is worth more than what I am being rewarded

Q1.10

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	20	58.8	58.8	58.8
	Neutral	11	32.4	32.4	91.2
	false	3	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.10



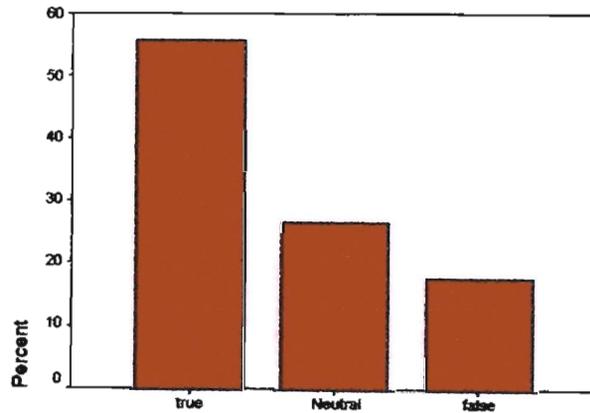
Q1.10

Q1.11 : I enjoy the work I do, the rewards and benefits are worth the difficulties

Q1.11

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	19	55.9	55.9	55.9
	Neutral	9	26.5	26.5	82.4
	false	6	17.6	17.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.11



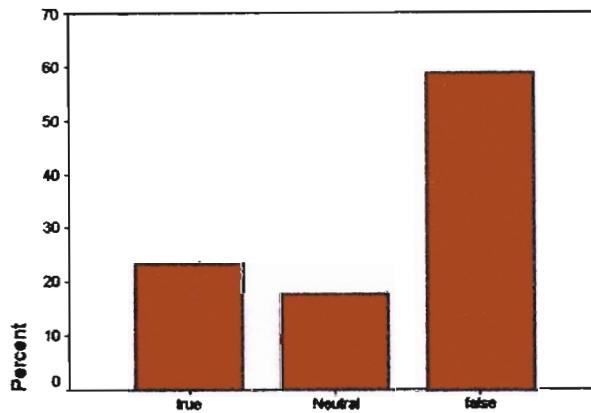
Q1.11

Q 1.12 : It is difficult to cope with family responsibilities and work

Q1.12

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	8	23.5	23.5	23.5
	Neutral	6	17.6	17.6	41.2
	false	20	58.8	58.8	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.12



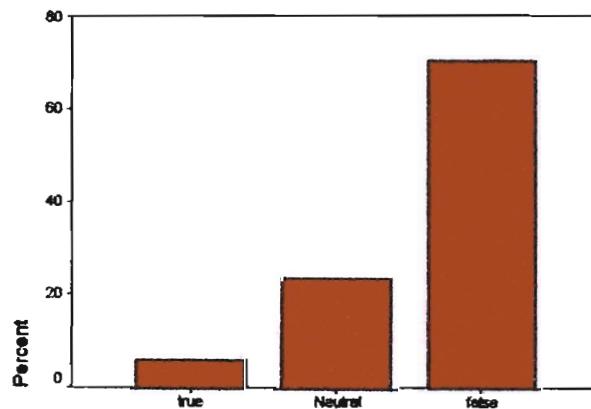
Q1.12

Q 1.13 : Family or other personal/financial problems tend to bother me a lot during the day

Q1.13

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	2	5.9	5.9	5.9
	Neutral	8	23.5	23.5	29.4
	false	24	70.6	70.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q1.13



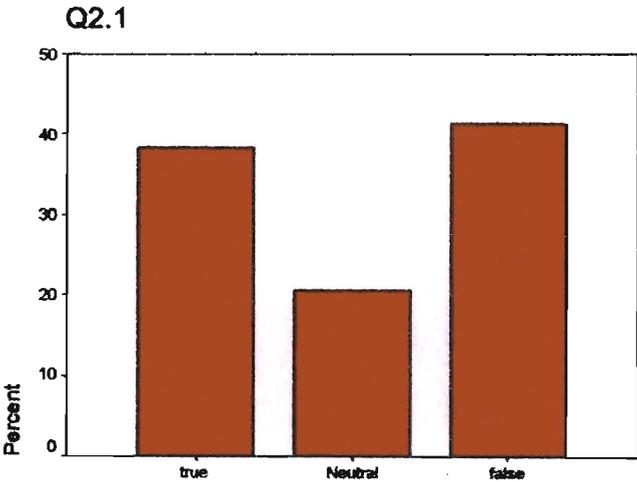
Q1.13

Section 2

Q 2.1 : I spend almost all of my time thinking about my work

Q2.1

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid true	13	38.2	38.2	38.2
Neutral	7	20.6	20.6	58.8
false	14	41.2	41.2	100.0
Total	34	100.0	100.0	



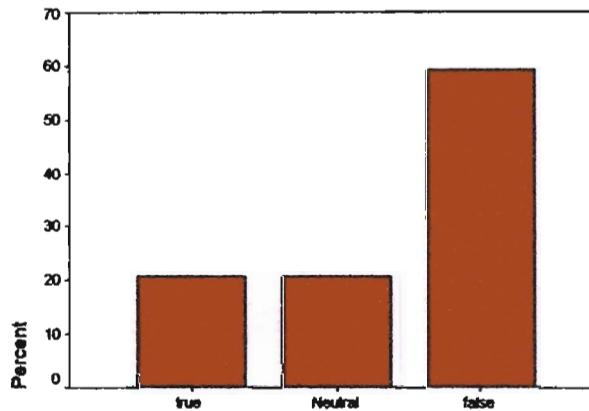
Q2.1

Q 2.2 : I get bored very easily

Q2.2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	7	20.6	20.6	20.6
	Neutral	7	20.6	20.6	41.2
	false	20	58.8	58.8	100.0
Total		34	100.0	100.0	

Q2.2



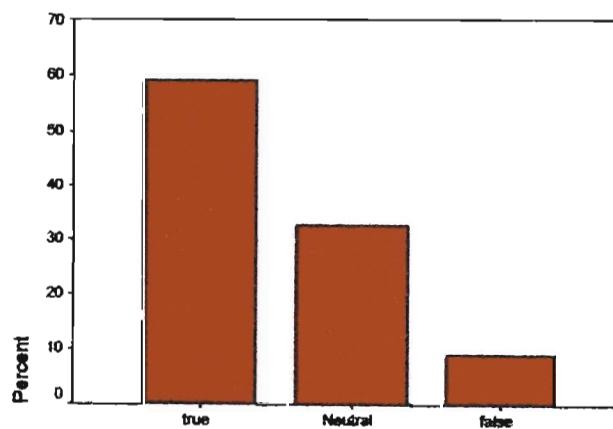
Q2.2

Q 2.3 : There are many people I could describe as good friends

Q2.3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	20	58.8	58.8	58.8
	Neutral	11	32.4	32.4	91.2
	false	3	8.8	8.8	100.0
Total		34	100.0	100.0	

Q2.3



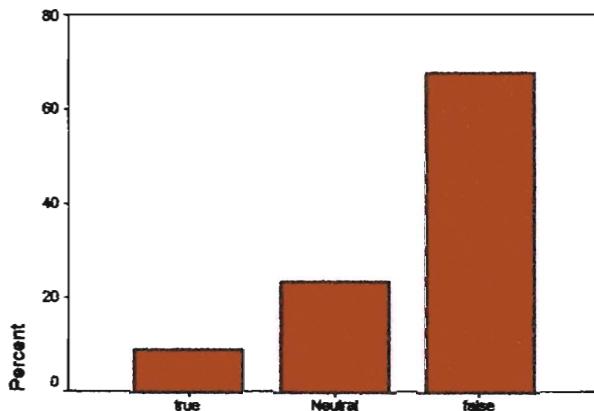
Q2.3

Q 2.4 : I work primarily because I have to survive, and not necessarily because I enjoy what I do

Q2.4

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	3	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Neutral	8	23.5	23.5	32.4
	false	23	67.6	67.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q2.4



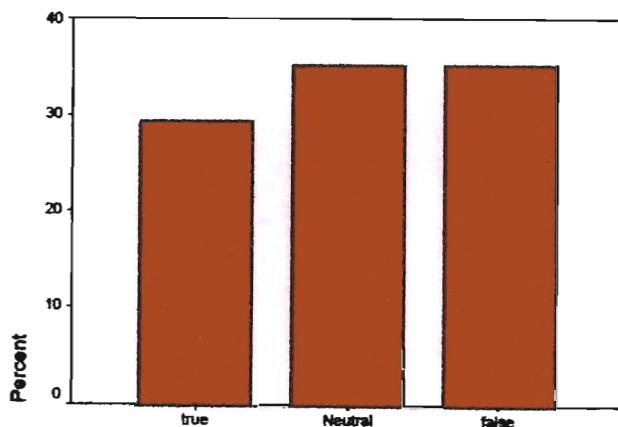
Q2.4

Q 2.5 : I get upset when things don't go the way I want or expected.

Q2.5

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	true	10	29.4	29.4	29.4
	Neutral	12	35.3	35.3	64.7
	false	12	35.3	35.3	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q2.5



Q2.5

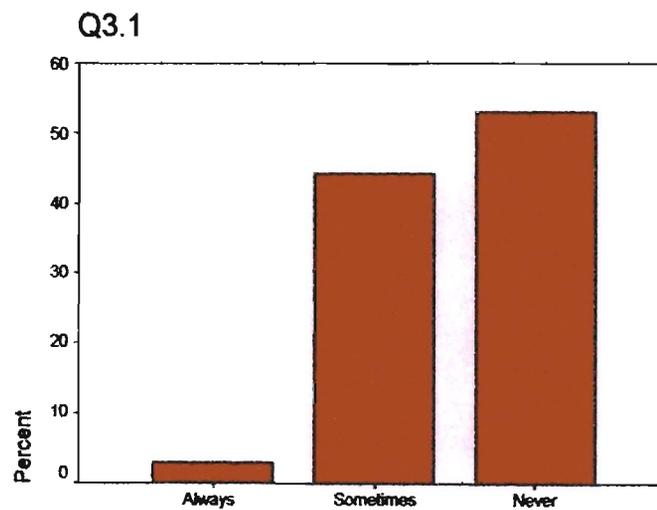
Section 3

Part 1 : I suffer from or I am subject to the following

Q 3.1 : Anxiety

Q3.1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Sometimes	15	44.1	44.1	47.1
	Never	18	52.9	52.9	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	



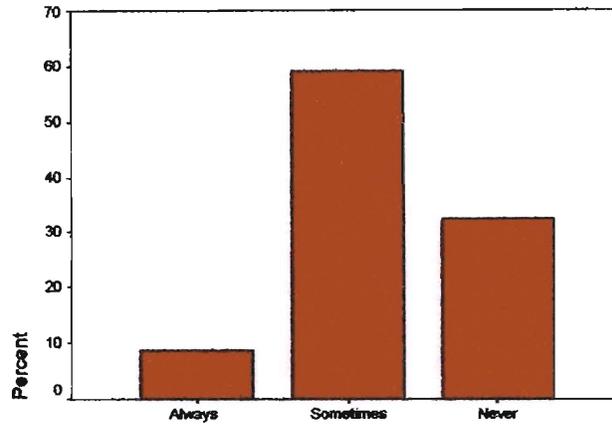
Q3.1

Q 3.2 : Tiredness

Q3.2

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	3	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Sometimes	20	58.8	58.8	67.6
	Never	11	32.4	32.4	100.0
Total		34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.2



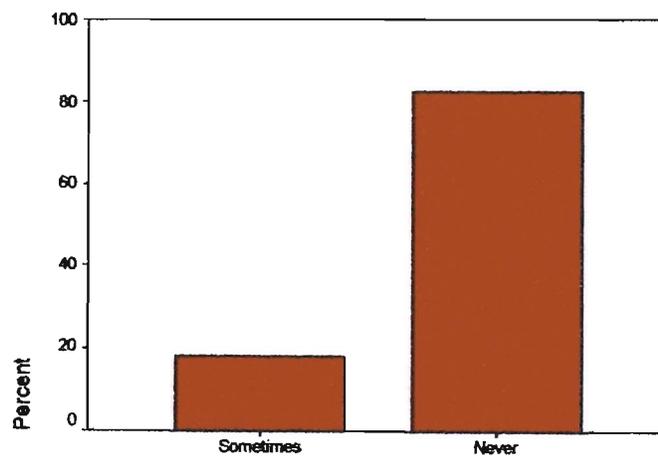
Q3.2

Q 3.3 : Faint or unusually weak for no reason

Q3.3

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	6	17.6	17.6	17.6
	Never	28	82.4	82.4	100.0
Total		34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.3



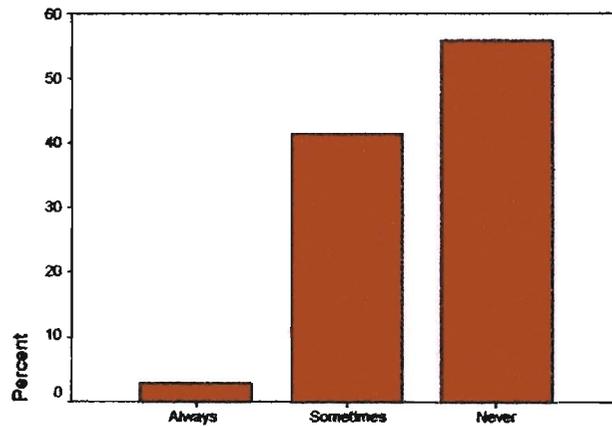
Q3.3

Q 3.4 : Sleeping disorders

Q3.4

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Sometimes	14	41.2	41.2	44.1
	Never	19	55.9	55.9	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.4



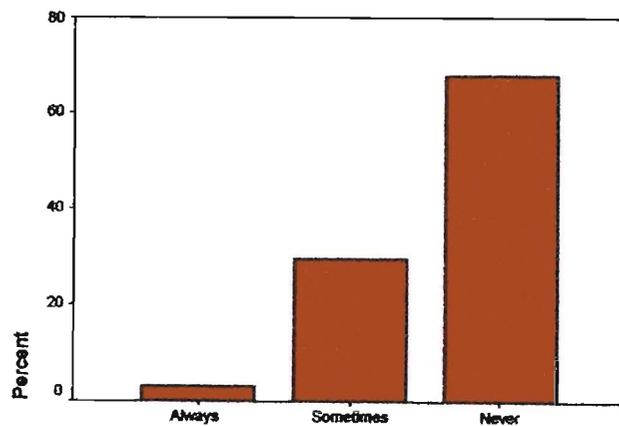
Q3.4

Q 3.5 : Frequent indigestion or other stomach problems

Q3.5

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Sometimes	10	29.4	29.4	32.4
	Never	23	67.6	67.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.5

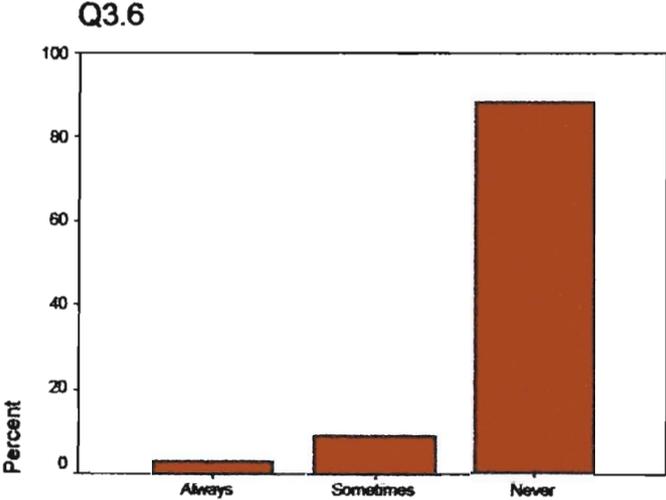


Q3.5

Q 3.6 : Excessive perspiration for no reason

Q3.6

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Sometimes	3	8.8	8.8	11.8
	Never	30	88.2	88.2	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	



Q3.6

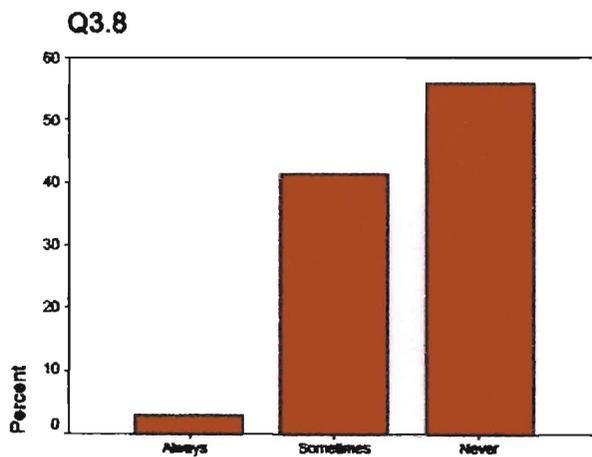
Part 2 :

I feel

Q 3.8 : Helpless

Q3.8

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Sometimes	14	41.2	41.2	44.1
	Never	19	55.9	55.9	100.0
Total		34	100.0	100.0	



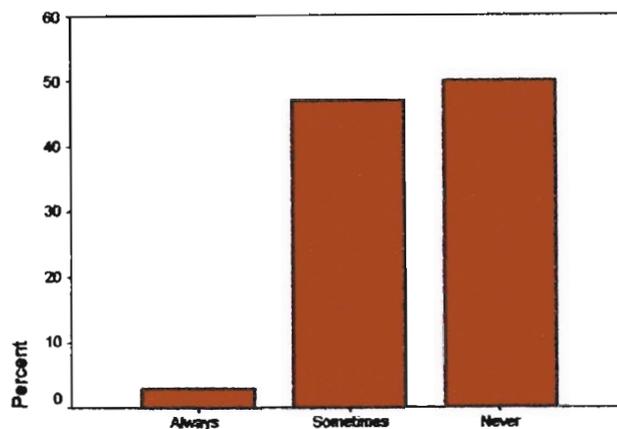
Q3.8

Q 3.9 : Depressed

Q3.9

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Sometimes	16	47.1	47.1	50.0
	Never	17	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.9



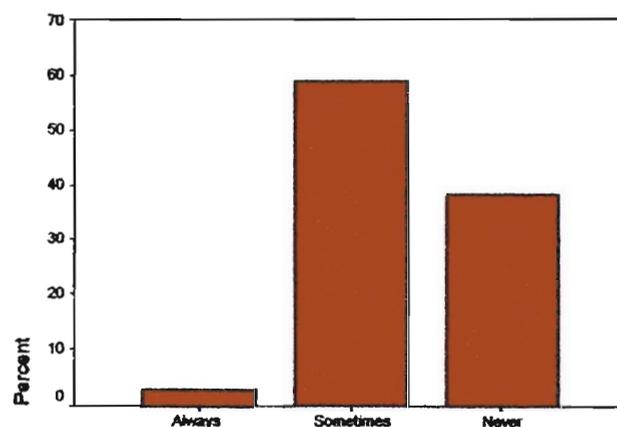
Q3.9

Q 3.10 : Tense and Keyed up

Q3.10

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Sometimes	20	58.8	58.8	61.8
	Never	13	38.2	38.2	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.10



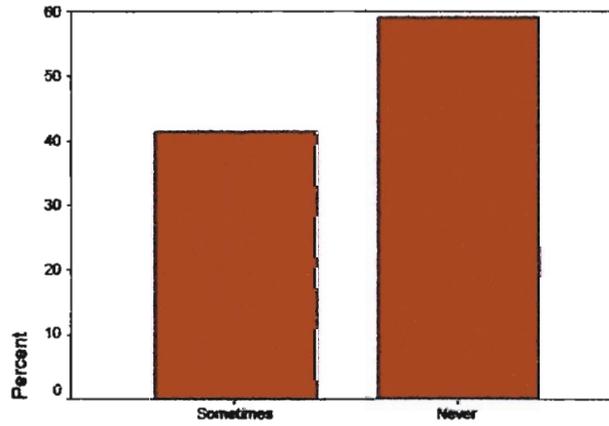
Q3.10

Q 3.11 : That I can't cope

Q3.11

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	14	41.2	41.2	41.2
	Never	20	58.8	58.8	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.11



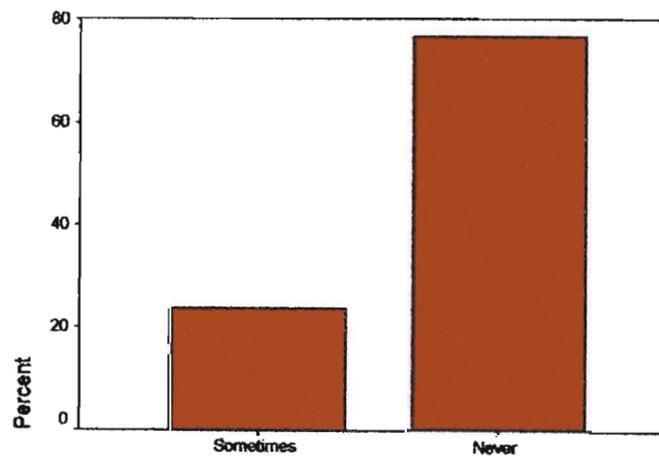
Q3.11

Q 3.12 : Confused

Q3.12

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	8	23.5	23.5	23.5
	Never	26	76.5	76.5	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.12



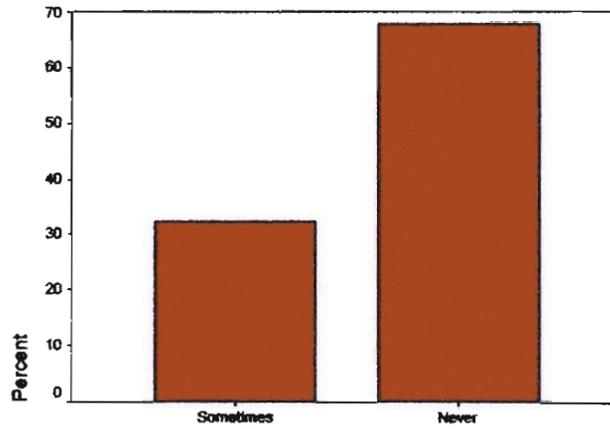
Q3.12

Q 3.13 : Lonely

Q3.13

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	11	32.4	32.4	32.4
	Never	23	67.6	67.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.13



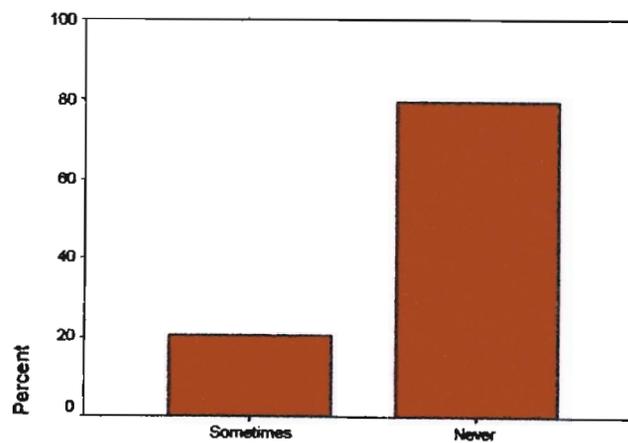
Q3.13

Q 3.14 : No one understands me

Q3.14

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	7	20.6	20.6	20.6
	Never	27	79.4	79.4	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.14

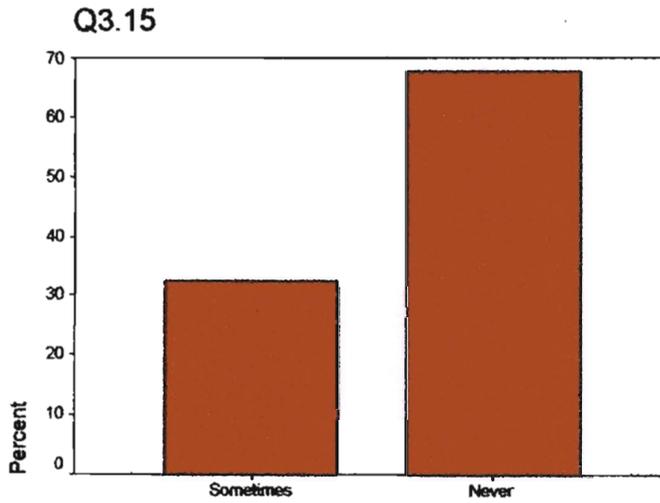


Q3.14

Q 3.15 : Lack of confidence

Q3.15

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	11	32.4	32.4	32.4
	Never	23	67.6	67.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	



Q3.15

Part 3 :

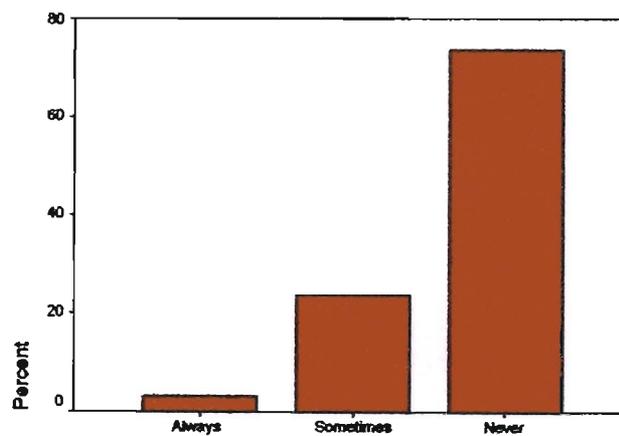
I suffer from:

Q 3.17 : Memory Loss

Q3.17

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Sometimes	8	23.5	23.5	26.5
	Never	25	73.5	73.5	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.17



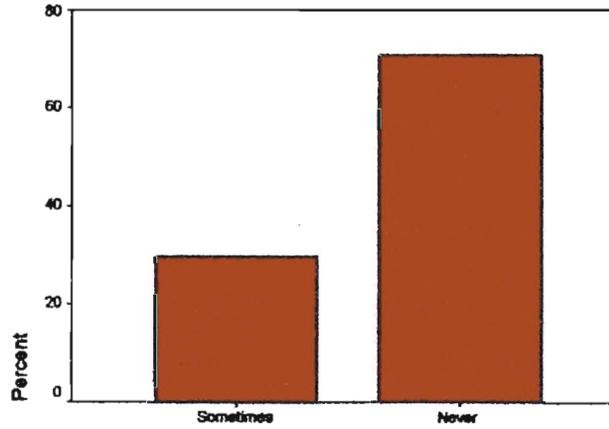
Q3.17

Q 3.18 : Poor concentration

Q3.18

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	10	29.4	29.4	29.4
	Never	24	70.6	70.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.18



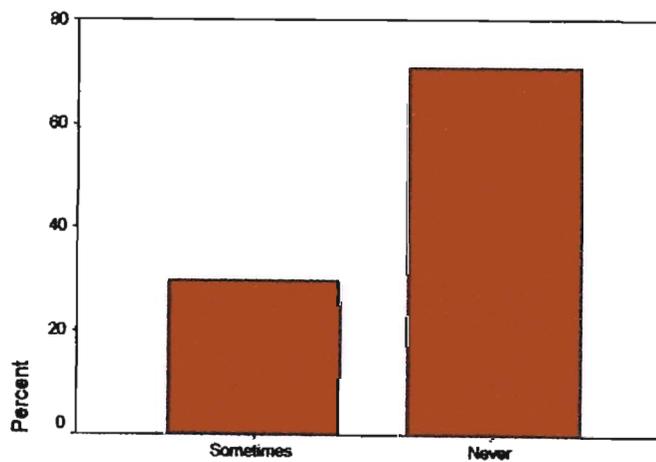
Q3.18

Q 3.19 : Procrastination

Q3.19

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	10	29.4	29.4	29.4
	Never	24	70.6	70.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.19



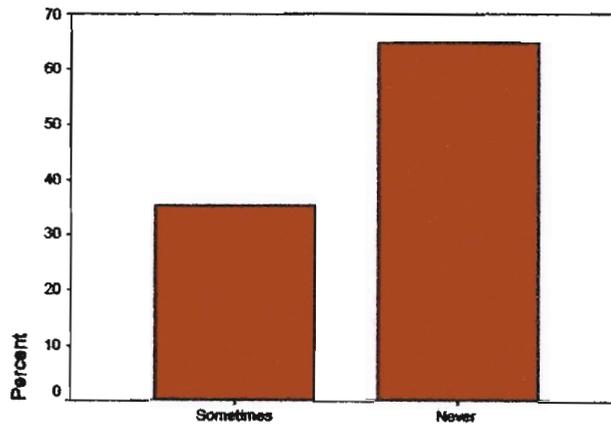
Q3.19

Q 3.20 : Poor time management

Q3.20

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	12	35.3	35.3	35.3
	Never	22	64.7	64.7	100.0
Total		34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.20



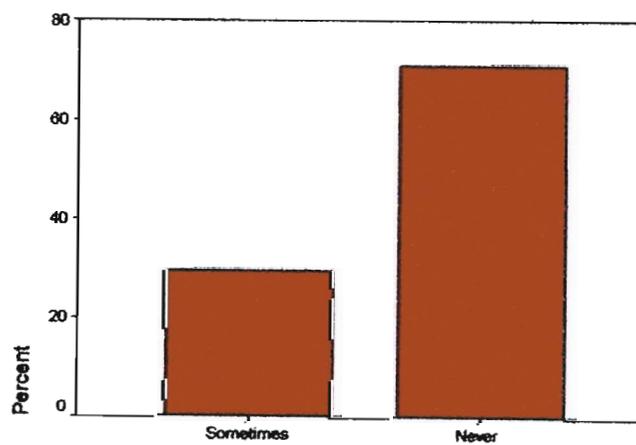
Q3.20

Q 3.21 : Need to take work at home

Q3.21

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	10	29.4	29.4	29.4
	Never	24	70.6	70.6	100.0
Total		34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.21



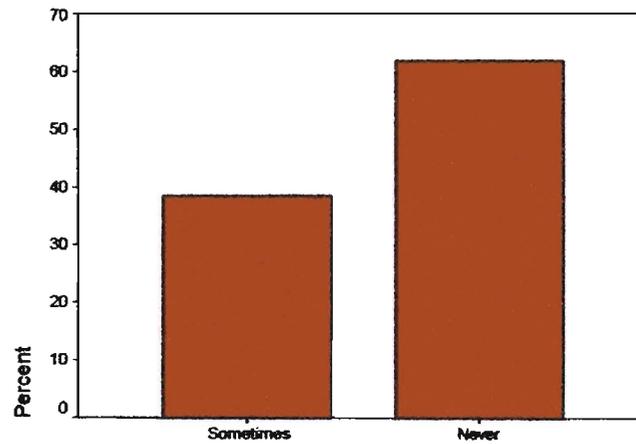
Q3.21

Q 3.22 : Increased aggressiveness and irritability

Q3.22

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	13	38.2	38.2	38.2
	Never	21	61.8	61.8	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.22



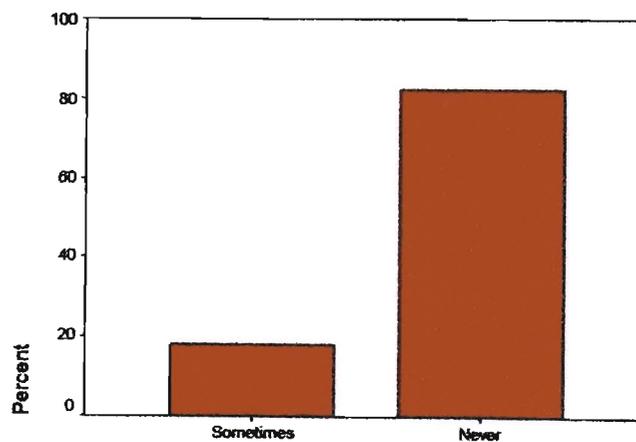
Q3.22

Q 3.23 : Lack of interest in life

Q3.23

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	6	17.6	17.6	17.6
	Never	28	82.4	82.4	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.23



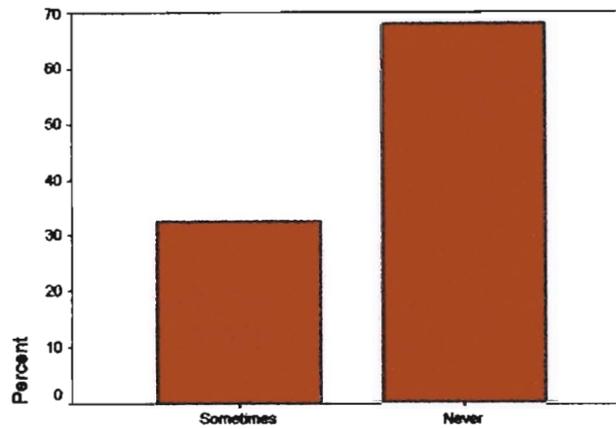
Q3.23

Q 3.24: Difficulty in making up my mind

Q3.24

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	11	32.4	32.4	32.4
	Never	23	67.6	67.6	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.24



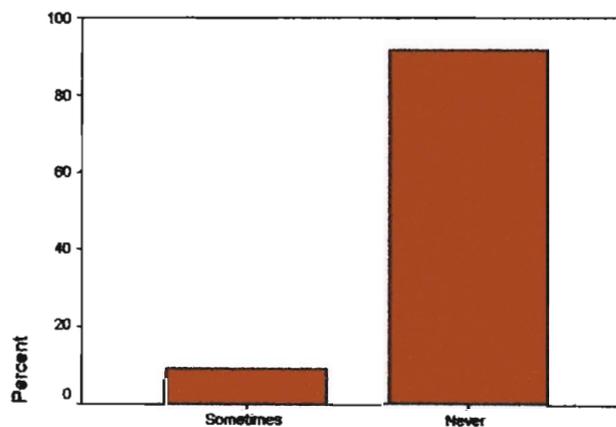
Q3.24

Q 3.25 : Nail biting

Q3.25

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	3	8.8	8.8	8.8
	Never	31	91.2	91.2	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.25



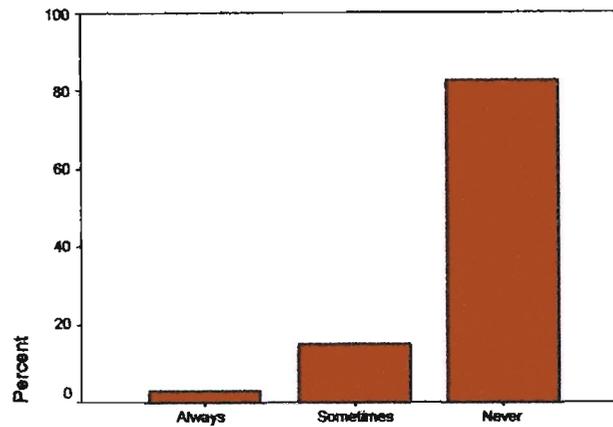
Q3.25

Q 3.26: Excessive or loss of appetite

Q3.26

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Sometimes	5	14.7	14.7	17.6
	Never	28	82.4	82.4	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.26



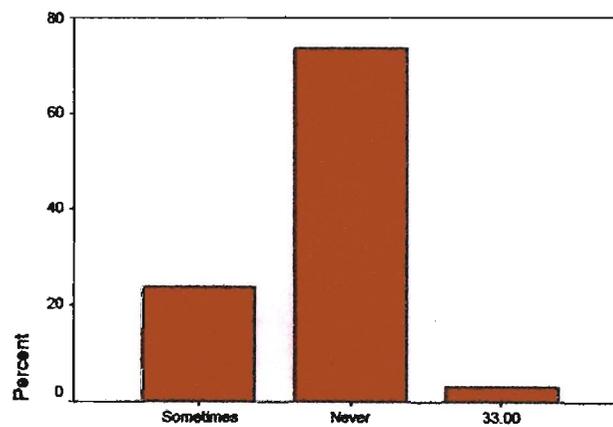
Q3.26

Q 3.27 : Fearfulness

Q3.27

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	8	23.5	23.5	23.5
	Never	25	73.5	73.5	97.1
	33.00	1	2.9	2.9	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.27



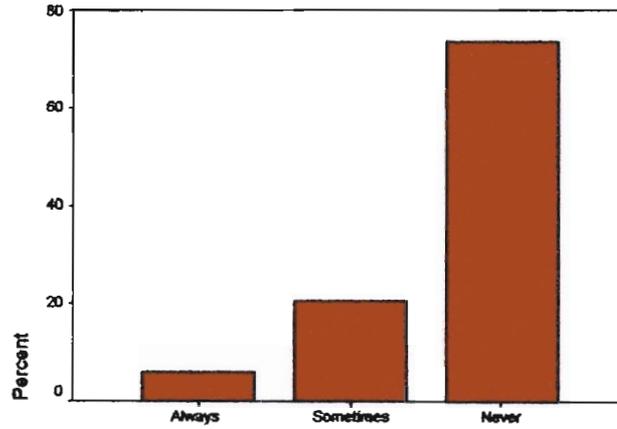
Q3.27

Q 3.28 : Greater use of nicotine/alcohol/caffeine to cope

Q3.28

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	2	5.9	5.9	5.9
	Sometimes	7	20.6	20.6	26.5
	Never	25	73.5	73.5	100.0
Total		34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.28



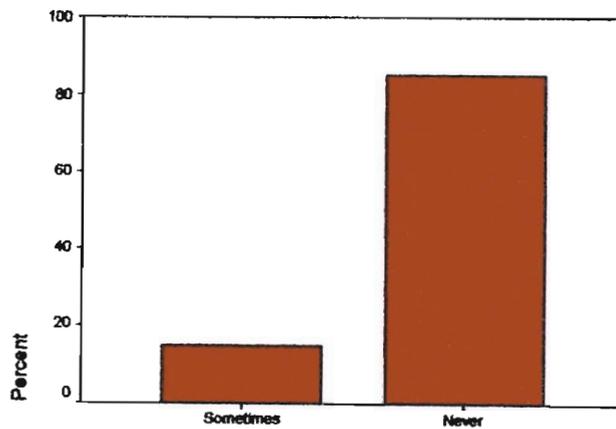
Q3.28

Q 3.29 : Fidgeting

Q3.29

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	5	14.7	14.7	14.7
	Never	29	85.3	85.3	100.0
Total		34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.29



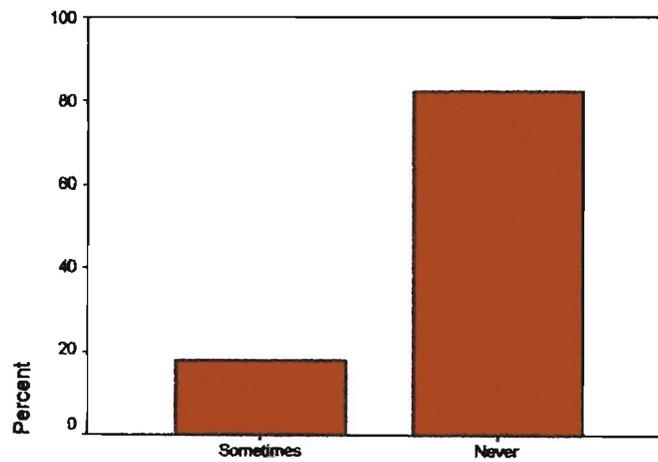
Q3.29

Q 3.20 : The need to cry for no reason

Q3.30

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Sometimes	6	17.6	17.6	17.6
	Never	28	82.4	82.4	100.0
	Total	34	100.0	100.0	

Q3.30



Q3.30

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Following the results of the survey from chapter 3, the frequency and percentages obtained will be discussed in this chapter, and attempt will be made to explain these results and reconcile them with the theory. The chapter will be structured according to the structure of the questionnaire.

From the theory, it was clear that job-related factors contribute a lot to people's stress. In the questionnaire, the various possible stressors which employees could be facing in their daily life were based on the various and most common problems which normally exist at an airport, and other personal problems that might have an impact on people.

- 1.1 Unpleasantness of the working environment in general
- 1.2 The airport being often a crowded place
- 1.3 Being a service industry, there is high interaction with people; passengers expect a lot from the company and people normally could have various reasons to complain e.g. delays of aircraft, lost luggage, problems of overbooking etc.
- 1.4 Regardless of the difficult times the airlines have faced and still are facing, more and more people are travelling nowadays and airports are crowded
- 1.5 Airline employees generally have long working hours or difficult shifts which could impact on family life
- 1.6 People have other personal problems as well which could have an effect on their performance at work

From sections 1, 2, 3 of the questionnaire, the findings were as follows:

4.2 SECTION 1

Q1.1: I would describe the workplace environment as unpleasant in general

Only 5.9% of the respondents found that the working environment was unpleasant. 8.8% found it as neutral, i.e. neither pleasant or unpleasant, and 85.3% disagreed that it was unpleasant.

Considering the facts mentioned above, a very low percentage of the employees considered the airport as unpleasant. Unpleasantness would be due to any factor that (or any reason for) the employee would find which could make the workplace unpleasant. However, a very high percentage didn't find it unpleasant. This could be because the airport has good infrastructure, with air conditioning, is clean and quite spacious with various facilities meant for both employees and passengers.

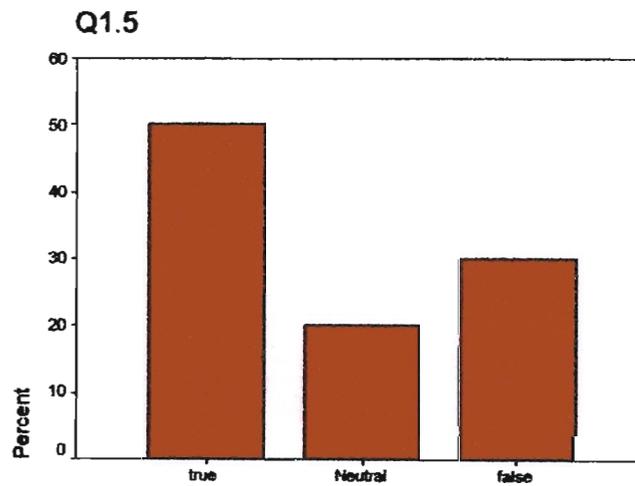
Q1.2 : The airport is always too crowded and/or there is too much noise to cope with

Only 2.9% of the respondents found that the airport is too crowded or there is too much noise. 47.1% had neutral or no definite opinion, and 50% disagreed that the airport is too crowded or too noisy.

It would therefore be reasonable to say that the employees did not generally suffer from the problem of the airport being too crowded, or being too noisy and the workplace as being unpleasant. The 47.1% of neutral opinion probably indicate that it is sometimes the case, and other times not. The physical environment of the workplace would thus be a weak potential stressor.

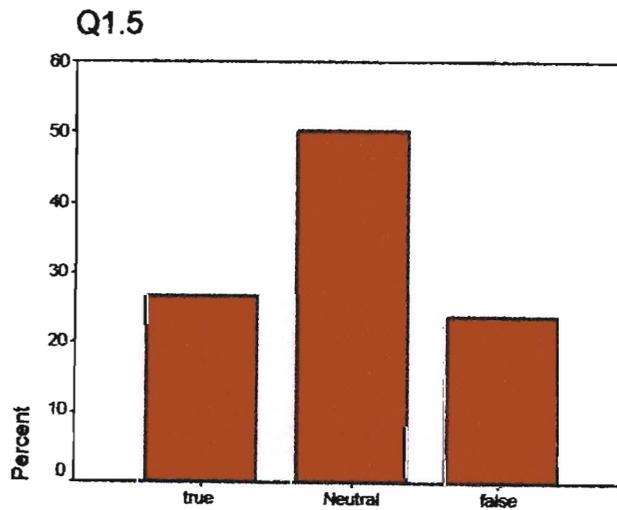
Among the supervisors and managers, 50% agreed with the statement that there is often lack of efficient communication to carry out the job effectively, 20% had a neutral opinion and 30% disagreed. This is interesting as among managers and supervisors 50% agreed with the statement which is approximately twice as much as the general staff. Managers and supervisors agreed more to the statement. This is illustrated below:

Managers and Supervisors



Q1.5

General employee



Q1.5

Q1.3: Customers/passengers can often be very difficult

61.8% find the statement that customers/passengers can be very difficult, 26% were of neutral opinion and 11.8% disagreed.

Relatively few disagreed with the statement. The neutral response from employees could imply that sometimes customers are difficult and sometimes not. More than half of the employees, however, were of opinion that passengers can often be very difficult, and thus this can be considered as a potential stressor in the job. And, according to the burnout theory, the fact that it is a service industry where employees constantly deal with people, the incidence of job burnout is more probable.

Q1.4 : The job requires a lot of patience.

85% of the employees responded positively to the statement the job requires a lot of patience. 5.9% were of neutral opinion, and 8.8% disagreed.

Considering the previous statement above in Q 1.3 (customers are often difficult) it is hardly surprising that the response to the statement that the job requires a lot of patience is also highly positive. The response here is congruent with the previous question, and again according to the burnout theory, this would be a potential stressor, as it causes psychological strain on individuals.

Q 1.5 : There is often lack of efficient communication to carry out the job effectively

Only 26.5% thought there was a lack of communication for effective performance at work, 50% didn't have an opinion on the statement and 23.5% disagreed.

Among those who had a definite opinion, roughly half of them had opposite opinions.

Lack of efficient communication is generally a weak potential stressor for the employees in general, but is a fairly strong potential stressor among the managers and supervisors, which are generally more accountable for results and performance.

Q 1.6 : Colleagues and/or superiors/subordinates are generally helpful and cooperative

79% of the employees agree with the statement that colleagues/superiors/subordinates are generally helpful and cooperative. 20.6% didn't have a definite opinion and no one disagreed.

It would be reasonable to assume that interpersonal relations at work is good employees enjoy the support of each other and that relations between the employees at work do not constitute a job-related stressor. According to the theory, interpersonal relations or the general climate at work among colleagues/subordinates, if not good can be a serious stressor for employees. On the other hand, if good, they can act as a buffer for people in face of other stressors.

Q 1.7 : There is a lot of pressure at work in different aspects

67.6% agreed that there is a lot of pressure at work, 26.5% didn't have a definite opinion, and only 5.9% disagreed.

The majority of employees encountered a lot of pressure at work, 26.5% of neutral opinion could imply that there is sometimes a lot of pressure and sometimes not, and only a few didn't encounter a lot of pressure. Therefore, there is a potential stressor at work in some way or another that employees face. The results for managers and supervisors only were quite similar to the other

employees in general, where 70% thought there is a lot of pressure at work, 20% did not have a definite opinion and 10% disagreed.

Q 1.8 : There is enough support from superiors/subordinates/colleagues

61.8% agreed that they get support from either superiors, subordinates or colleagues. 29.4% were of neutral opinion and 8.8% disagreed.

The question here is similar to Q 1.6 in order to test the reliability of the responses. The results, however, although fairly similar, differs slightly. As opposed to Q 1.6 where nobody disagreed with the statement that colleagues/superiors/subordinates are generally helpful and cooperative, here, 8.8% disagreed that there is enough support from their superiors/subordinates/colleagues. However, the frequency that everybody agrees with the statement is fairly close in both questions. We can still maintain that relations among employees are healthy and do not constitute a potential stressor to employees.

Q 1.9: My job involves high interaction with people

93.9% of the responded agreed, 3% had neutral responses, and another 3% disagreed.

The 3 % of neutral responses could imply that sometimes their job involves high interaction with people, and sometimes not. It is not surprising to see such a high frequency of positive responses, given the nature of industry and the employees' work as discussed above. The response here is congruent with the responses in Q 1.3 (Passengers can be very difficult) and Q 1.4 (the job requires a lot of patience). It would be reasonable to assume that the fact that there is high



interaction with people and that passengers can often be difficult, the job would require a lot of patience. This description of a job fits in the category of the burnout theory. Therefore, the high interaction with people is an important potential stressor.

Q 1.10 : The job I do is worth more than what I am being rewarded.

58.8% of the employees agreed with the statement, 32.4% did not have a definite opinion and only 8.8% disagreed.

A relatively high frequency of people agreed with the statement which has implications for motivation and job satisfaction. The fact that employees think that they are not rewarded enough for what they are doing could be potential stressor.

Q 1.11: I enjoy the work I do, the rewards and benefits are worth the difficulties

55.9% enjoy their job and think that the benefits are worth the difficulties. 26.5% have a neutral opinion and 17.6% disagreed.

Although Q 1.10 and Q1.11 are similar and could mean roughly the same thing, the responses differed. Although 58.8% thought their job is worth more than what they are being rewarded, 55.9% enjoy their work and think that the rewards and benefits are worth the difficulties. It could imply that although, they are not rewarded enough through salary, other things are satisfactory, they enjoy their job, have enough job satisfaction and get intrinsic reward.

Another explanation could be that employees would not like to think that their job or what they are doing is worth less than they are actually being rewarded and would like to think the other way. The possibility of bias towards oneself exists.

Q1.12 : It is difficult to cope with family responsibilities and work

23.5% agreed with the statement that it is difficult to cope with family responsibilities and work, 17.6% did not have a definite opinion, and 58.8% disagreed.

A fairly low percentage of employees had difficulties reconciling family responsibilities and work. This factor does not present itself as an important potential stressor outside the workplace. There is therefore very low probability that a problem will be affecting employees, either in their personal life or at work.

Q 1.13 : Family and other personal/financial problems tend to bother me a lot during the day.

Only 5.9% agreed with the statement, 23.5% did not have a definite response and 70.6% disagreed with the statement.

A very high percentage of people do not think about their personal problems in the workplace. This could mean that either they do not have major problems, or they cope well with their problems so that they are not affected in a major way by their problems all the time. It can be noticed that factors outside the workplace do not constitute a major potential stressor.

4.2.1 SUMMARY

From the analysis and interpretation of section 1 statements, the findings and assumptions are as follows:

- The physical environment of the workplace does not present itself as a potential stressor (+)
- The nature of the job, i.e high interaction with people and difficult passengers which requires a lot of patience constitute a threat to cause stress and burnout (-)
- Lack of efficient communication, assessed by managers and supervisors, is more of a problem for these managers and supervisors than for the employees in general. (+, -)
- The employees are generally satisfied with their job, although a high percentage thought they are not being rewarded enough. (+)
- Factors outside the workplace in general do not pose as a serious potential stressor (+)
- Among the possible potential stressors, only one aspect of their job seems to be a serious threat to stress, which reduces greatly the chances of stress in people's life. (+)

The positive sign (+) indicates a positive aspect of work (less stressful) work and a negative sign (-) indicates a potential stressor.

We can see that there are significantly more positive results than negative results coming from the analysis suggesting that there are only few stressors at the workplace. The potential stressors mentioned in the questioned have not been proved to be actual stressors since the employees did not perceive the stressors as such.

4.3 SECTION 2

Q 2.1 : I spend most of my time thinking about my work

38.2% of the respondents agree to the statement that they spend most of their time thinking about their work, 20.6% had a neutral response and 41.2% do not spend most their time thinking about their work.

Most of the employees do not always think about their work. Firstly, this could be because they are coping well with their work and its challenges either because of their personality traits and how they perceive their stressors, and/or because they get a lot of support from colleagues which acts as a buffer and which makes the problems seem less challenging. Secondly, it could be because their work do not contain many or serious stress factors.

Q 2.2: I get bored very easily

20.6% of the employees think they get bored very easily, 20.6% have no definite response and 58.8% don not get bored very easily.

Emotions serve many psychosocial functions and people experience feelings as a result of their emotions. How people perceive things, therefore affects their thoughts, emotions and behaviour. Getting bored easily is a characteristic which indicates how prone to stress one is. Getting bored easily would mean that employees keep having feeling of dissatisfaction which increases the chances of feeling stressed. Human beings appear to have a strong and basic need for stimulation. People who get bored easily find little stimulation in whatever they do and this is a cause for stress.

The 20.6% of the employees who get bored very easily is more prone to stress, however, at least 58.8% do not possess this characteristic and therefore could cope with a fair amount of stress.

Q2.3: *There are many people I could describe as good friends*

58.8% of the employees agree to this statement, 32.4% have neutral responses and only 8% disagreed. This shows that most of the employees are not having relationship problems as suggested by burnout theory, or as one of the common results of stress. Secondly, having many good friends implies a characteristic that is pleasant and a good perception and acceptance of things from the person. Thirdly, friends constitute social support which is beneficial in countering the effects of stress, as friends imply support in case of problems.

Q2.4: *I work primarily because I have to survive, and not necessarily because I enjoy what I do*

Only 8.8% agree with that statement, 23.5% gave a neutral response and 67.6% disagree.

This confirms the fact that employees are coping well with their work, and are generally satisfied.

Q 2.5 : *I get upset when things don't go the way I want or expected*

29.4% of the responses agreed with the statement, 35.3% were neutral and another 35.3% disagreed.

Some people have a strong sense of challenge and control and their hardiness helps them to reduce stress. On the other hand, some people are always in a state of stress and can always find something to worry about. When someone perceives a situation as controllable, it becomes an important part of their feelings of security. This is a problem characteristic to type A personalities who constantly feel the need to be in control of things otherwise they feel threatened. People with these characteristics are hence more prone to stress. Type A personalities, as the theory suggests, need to be in control of everything or else they can't cope with the problems, and do not like to be in front of challenging situations. These type A personalities have higher anxiety levels and are generally more stressed than Type B personalities. As we can see here, a relatively low number of people seem to possess this characteristic from the general employees.

4.3.1 SUMMARY

From the analysis and interpretation of the data in section 2, the following findings and assumptions are made:

- Low frequency of people think about their work all the time (+)
- Low frequency of people get bored very easily (+)
- High frequency of people have good friends and thus social support (+)
- Only a minority of employees work only because they have to survive (+)
- Low frequency of people get upset when they don't have control over things, therefore are less likely to be stress-prone (+)

According to the theories, how people perceive stress situations or potential stressors depends on people's characteristics and personality traits which thus determine their vulnerability to stress. This section has tested a few

characteristics and the finding has proved to be that the employees are not particularly vulnerable to stress, as shown by the positive signs in the summary. The results from sections 1 and 2 are compliant, supporting the theories and showing that the employees do not suffer from major stress.

4.4 SECTION 3

Part 1: Physiological effects of stress

I suffer from

Q 3.1 : Anxiety

Only 2.9% always suffer from anxiety, 44.1% only sometimes and 52.9% never suffer from anxiety.

Q 3.2: Tiredness

Only 8.8% always suffer from tiredness, 58.8% sometimes and 32.4% never suffer from tiredness

Q 3.3: Faint or unusually weak for no reason

Nobody always feel faint or unusually weak for no reason, and 82.4% never suffer from this problem

Q 3.4: Sleeping disorders

Only 2.9% always suffer from sleeping disorders, 41.1% sometimes and 55.9% never.

Q 3.5: Frequent indigestion or other stomach problems

Only 2.9% always suffer from these problems, 29.4% sometimes and 67.6% never.

Q 3.6: Excessive perspiration for no reason

2.9% always suffer from the above, 8.8% sometimes and 88.2% never.

Part 2

The psychological effect of stress

I feel

Q 3.8 : Helpless

2.9% of the employees always suffer from helplessness, 41.2% sometimes and 55.9 never.

Q 3.9: I feel depressed

2.9% of the employees always feel depressed, 47.1% sometimes and 50% never.

Q3.10: Tense and keyed up

2.9% of employees always feel tense and keyed up, 58.8% sometimes and 38.2% never.

Q 3.11: That I can't cope

None of the employees always feel that they can't cope, 41.2% sometimes and 58.8% never

Q3.12: Confused

None always feel confused, 23.5% sometimes and 76.5% never feel confused.

Q3.13: Lonely

None of the employees always feel lonely, 32.4% sometimes and 67.6% never.

Q3.14: No one understand me

None of the employees always feel that way, 20.6% sometimes and 79.4% never.

Q 3.15: Lack of confidence

No one always feel a lack of confidence, 32.4% sometimes and 67.6% never.

Part 3

The behavioural effects of stress

I suffer from

Q 3.17: Memory loss

2.9% of the employees suffer from memory loss, 23.5% sometimes and 73.5% never

Q 3.18: Poor concentration

No one always suffer from poor concentration, 29.4% sometimes and 70.6% never.

Q3.19: Procrastination

No one always suffer from procrastination, 29.4% sometimes and 70.6% never.

Q 3.20: Poor time management

No one always suffer from poor time management, 35.3% sometimes and 64.7%never

Q3.21: Need to take work home

No one always suffer from the need to take work home, 29.4% sometimes and 70.6% never.

Q 3.22: Increased aggressiveness or irritability

No one always suffer from the above, 38.2% sometimes and 61.8 never

Q 3.23: Lack of interest in life

No one always suffer from the above , 17.6% sometimes and 82.4% never

Q 3.24: Difficulty in making up my mind

No one always suffer from the above , 32.4% sometimes and 67.6% never

Q3.25: Nail biting

No one always suffer from this , 8.8% sometimes and 91.2% never

Q3.26: Excessive or loss of appetite

2.9% always suffer from excessive or loss of appetite, 14.7% sometimes, 82.4% never

Q3.27: Fearfulness

23.5% always suffer from fearfulness, 73.5% sometimes and 2.9% never

Q 3.28: Greater use of nicotine/ alcohol/caffeine to cope

5.9% always feel the need for the use of nicotine/alcohol/caffeine to cope, 20.6% sometimes and 73.5% never

Q 3.29: Fidgeting

No one always suffer from fidgeting , 20.6% sometimes and 85.3% never

Q 3.30: The need to cry for no reason

No one always suffer from the above, 17.6% sometimes and 82.9% never

4.4.1 SUMMARY

The employees seem healthy and do not show symptoms that might be related to stress.

- Part 1

It would be interesting to note that in the physiological symptoms of part 1, Q 3.1, 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 received exactly the same frequency of positive response to the respective symptoms (2.9%).

- Part 2

Again exactly 2.9% exhibits the psychological symptoms for Q 3.8, 3.9, 3.10.

Around half of the employees seem to exhibit the symptoms sometimes, which might be related to occasional but not ever-present stress. Some of the symptoms are never experienced by the employees.

- Part 3

Again, 2.9% of the employees always suffer from two of the behavioural symptoms, the rest sometimes or never.

The findings are consistent for the 2.9% of the employees which lead to believe that at least 2.9% of the employees seem to suffer from one symptom of stress and are experiencing the consequences. Apart from Q 3.2, 3.27 and 3.28, the symptoms that are always experienced come from 2.9% of the employees.

There might be therefore either a small percentage of the employees who might be stressed to the point of developing all these physiological, psychological and behavioural problems in a consistent way, or that 2.9% of the employees suffer at least from one of the symptoms.

However, the majority of the employees do not exhibit significant symptoms. Therefore, it seems that the employees in general have a moderate level of stress and moderately experience or exhibits some of the symptoms. Even if they do sometimes show the signs and symptoms, they might be occasional stress, or they might not be stress-related, but could originate from other causes.

Again, the findings in section 3 are consistent with sections 1 and 2, showing that the perception of low stress factors is consistent with their characteristics and predispositions (not particularly vulnerable to stress) thus showing very low levels of physiological, psychological and behavioural responses.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Neither job burnout, which is normally associated to the type of job airline employees are more likely to face, nor the other signs of stress appear to be significantly present among the employees researched. The burnout theory states that there are three key dimensions of this response which are an overwhelming exhaustion; feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job; and a sense of ineffectiveness and failure. The results of the research conducted at the Durban international airport do not show any close relationship to the description of job burnout.

The findings lead to believe that the employees at the Durban international airport do not suffer a lot from stress. The potential stressors are very few as the physical environment has not proved to be unpleasant, the relationships between superiors, subordinates and colleagues are good, the employees are not lonely as many have good friends, they enjoy their job and are not particularly dissatisfied. All these factors contribute to reduce the incidence of stressors occurring.

The fact that the airline industry in Durban is not particularly stressful is contrary to the popular belief that working in the airline in general is a stressful job. Several factors could account for these:

As mentioned in the theory, research findings suggest that levels of stress for different responsibilities within the organisation also seem to vary. In general, people responsible for other people – who must deal with them, motivate them, and make decisions about them – experience higher levels of stress than persons who handle other aspects of a business. However, the survey included only the ground staff at the airport and only a small percentage of managers and supervisors, and do not include cabin crew (pilots, air hostesses and stewards)

and traffic controllers who normally have a lot more responsibilities and are accountable for important safety aspects and long working hours. The sample surveyed targeted the population at the airport who have stable working hours and who do not suffer from work overload. Moreover, the airline industry is a very complex industry and involves many other aspects of the jobs which the research did not attempt to survey.

Secondly, Durban International Airport, although having high frequency of flights in and out, consists mainly of domestic flights and therefore is not as busy airport as other airports of the world, or for example, Johannesburg International airport. In spite of the fact that it is an international airport, only one airline operates international flights to and from Durban. This helps decreasing a lot of the potential problems arising with international flights, for example, flights arriving and departing at odd hours or of foreign passengers being stranded as a result of delays or cancellation of flights, not to mention the higher volume of passengers arriving and departing with international flights. Therefore, the main and various potential stressors are considerably reduced.

Another factor could be that the employees seemed to be more of Type B personalities, according to the results of section 2.

Stress, as discussed in the theory, can sometimes stem from negative personal relationships with subordinates, colleagues and superiors but when the relationships are cordial and supportive, they can reduce or “buffer” the impact of various sources of stress and exert other beneficial effects.: the reason for this is that social support acts as a palliative, mitigating the negative effects of high-strain jobs. This can alleviate any stress that might be occurring at work enabling the employees to cope well in face of stressors.

However, according to theory, even if there might be stressors and people are initially affected, coping and defence occurs, which are efforts made by the

individual to resolve P-E misfit. Coping entails efforts to improve objective P-E fit, either by changing the objective person (i.e., adaptation) or the objective environment (i.e., environmental mastery) (French et al., 1974).

Adaptation to the environment is an interesting phenomenon which occurs when people are exposed to the influences of the environment. Theories of environmental influences of ambient conditions are based on short-term psychological processes that may disappear after adaptation has taken place. People can adapt to many conditions. Any change in the physical environment is likely to attract the occupant's attention, at least for a while. Change in the environment will normally create a disruption until adaptation is underway. Workers may tend take their environment for granted, but they are unlikely to ignore apparent inequities. The employees could have successfully adapted to the different stressors as they are faced with them everyday and are not aware of the stressors.

Another factor to consider is that employees, even if they feel the signs and symptoms of stress are not ready to admit them. As previously discussed before, Harrison(1978) notes that defence in an attempt to cope with stress include the denial of experienced strain, such that the person acknowledges subjective P-E misfit but discounts its resulting negative impacts on health. Another form of defence is described by French et al. (1974), who indicate that a person may respond to subjective misfit by reducing the perceived importance of the dimension on which misfit occurs, as when a person disengages from unattainable goals (Kingler, 1975; Schuler, 1985). The employees have therefore might been successful in coping with stress in this way so that the resulting perceptions and reactions to stress factors have appeared in the results of the survey.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The causes of stress cover a wide range. Stress can be motivating and invigorating, bringing forth excellence in an individual and a company – but stress that is unrelenting can damage a company's greatest resource: its valuable people. Because stress stems from many different sources, its complete elimination is impossible, but it can however be managed.

Work-related stress is now becoming a major issue in many industries, but it is especially problematic in the airline industry, where health and safety concerns are paramount. However, from the survey at the Durban International Airport, stress has been found not to be a major problem, but only a very small sample was taken covering only one aspect of the jobs in the airline industry.

In this chapter, some recommendations about stress management will be presented, firstly because, although the particular case in the survey did not seem to be affected, more and more people, and therefore companies and industries, generally are. Secondly, it is because to be proactive and to be knowledgeable about the management of stress when stress does strike. The airline industry is especially vulnerable as there are often various crises and employees must be prepared.

As a consequence of all the costs that could be associated with stress for the organisation, and all the factors which originates from the workplace, managers of organisations have a shared responsibility in reducing stress for the employees, its effects as well as finding suitable welfare programs and practising sound human resource practices and policies.

Personal strategies for coping with stress are different from organisational strategies for managing stress. While personal strategies centre around a common theme – arming individuals with techniques they can use for dealing with stress when it occurs, organisational strategies for managing stress adopt a somewhat different approach. They seek to minimise such reactions by removing factors that induce them from the work setting. Many of these techniques involve changes in the structure or function of organisations themselves, while others focus primarily on changes in the nature of specific jobs. However, another approach initiated by organisations to help people deal with stress is counselling which help individuals explore problems so that they can decide what to do about them.

5.2 ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGIES

A first step is to have a constructive, organisation-wide policy towards the management of stress which will provide a sound framework in which individual managers can deal with stress-related issues as they arise in themselves or among their subordinates. Indeed, managers have a central role in the management of organisational stress, as it is through their example and their actions that team climate and attitudes towards stress are fostered. Moreover, it is through the line management application of HRM policy and practice (for example, the volume and type of work that employees have to undertake) that stress can be moderated. For example, HRM inputs can have a critical role in the moderation of potential stressors in the workplace through the activities such as job design, training and development, and policy development in the areas of codes of conduct to moderate culture and climate and contracts of employment (Cornelius, 1992).

A second step would be to eliminate or reduce possible stressors in the workplace. For example, it is difficult to deny the potential importance of the

physical working environment for an organisation's effectiveness. The work place can influence individual satisfaction and performance; it also seems to have a role in communication and in the formation of groups. These in turn can contribute to organisational effectiveness (Eric Sundstrom, 1986). Therefore, this needs to be taken into consideration in order to minimise the conditions for stress in organisations.

Another major source of stress in work settings involves the nature and demands of various jobs. For this reason, people considering a career in a specific field, or in a specific field, or in a specific department within a company, would do well to take account of the level of stress it involves.

Changes within organisations are particularly stressful and are particularly common nowadays in face of changing environment and strategies of organisations. Within the context of the management of change in particular, there is often an opportunity to manage the change that helps to moderate the impact and make it less stressful for employees. Across an organisation, this could entail audits of employee morale, training and heightening the awareness of employees and managers to detect and manage stress in themselves and in others, and reviews of HRM policy and practice and its impact on physical and psychological well-being. But what about the detail of what can be done? In one small study, it was found that the profile of the sources of stress was characteristic of an organisation although the individual stressors were rarely unique to it (Cornelius and Duigman, 1996). The greatest source of difference was the attitude held towards stress and its management, and, at its most mature, this was represented as a shared responsibility between management and employees and a reality that required proactive management, not a laissez-faire approach or outright denial and avoidance. However, it can be difficult to talk about stress in organisations with a closed style of management that expect their employees to work hard and not care about their home life.

Good management practice should take stress management into account. Companies can do a lot to help. A first step is to recognise that both the company and the individual have responsibility for employee welfare. It is important to get to know the needs of the staff, to provide appropriate support systems, a satisfactory work environment, acknowledgement for work well-done, training courses and a good communication flow between management and staff. Companies which offer stress management courses could not only improve productivity, but leave staff feeling that the company cares. As research has shown a key element of good leadership is not domination but persuasion, which occurs when others adopt the goals of the group as their own on a basis of willingness. The idea is to build cohesive and goal-orientated teams because there is a direct link between leadership and team performance.

Motivating employees will help in their well-being and in reducing stress. For instance, employee rewards in the airline industry are also an important part of providing the best possible service to clients. There are many different types of promotional products that can effectively reward employee performance. From an imprintable acrylic award to a brass model plane, there are unique options for airlines to recognize outstanding employee performance.¹

"Employees will also appreciate practical gifts like passport cases or luggage with the company's logo embroidered on them," says Silver. "And desktop items like an airplane shaped clock provide constant reminders that employees are being cared for by the companies they work for."²

¹ <http://www.printablepromotions.com/Articles/Transportation.htm>

² <http://www.printablepromotions.com/Articles/Transportation.htm>

5.3 PERSONAL STRATEGIES

Certain people are more prone to stress (e.g. those exhibiting type A behaviour), depending on their personality characteristics and traits. If anyone has high degree of certainty of a positive outcome of an event, his/her hope is transformed into confidence and less stress. Uncertainty of a positive outcome, on the other hand, will produce more stress. When this happens, coping skills need to be sharpened. The way one deals with stress is referred as coping. Coping itself involves both active and adaptive processes. Coping can be problem-focused or emotion-focused (Schlebusch). There are several stress management techniques, e.g. those through stress management training, which have been researched and developed to cope with stress.

Stress management has a variety of techniques which are available and which are all aimed at reducing the impact of psychological stress. These techniques include education about the nature of stress and its implications; substantial training and practice in relaxation and/or meditation; stress inoculation, in which individuals are encouraged to redefine stressors and to adopt more positive orientations to stressful situations; the use of imagery to allow people to rehearse coping with frequently encountered stressors in their mind, as preparation for coping with them in real life; schooling in effective coping strategies, cognitive restructuring, in which people are encouraged to rearrange their thinking and reorder their priorities. Some forms of stress management training may include other specifically focused approaches, such as teaching people to reduce type A behaviour, or getting them to manage anger better. Whatever the precise arrangement and form of stress management training, its goal is to help people cope better with the challenges and stresses of their lives.

As we have seen, many different procedures for coping with stress have been developed. There are personal strategies approaches which are techniques that individuals can apply to their own behaviour in order to counteract stress, and

organisational strategies which are techniques organisations can follow to minimise stress among employees.

It is not so much the stress and the change that are problematic, but the way people perceive it and react to it. Coping abilities will determine the degree of stress and its consequences. There are wide individual differences in the amount of stress that a person can cope with before it becomes a problem. Certain personality characteristics can maintain high stress levels.

People exhibiting Type A behaviour are those that are more prone to stress. Type A personality is characterised by a sense of work-related time urgency or “hurry sickness”, the need to control at all costs, a constant struggle to achieve, an impatience at anyone or anything that gets in the way, irritability and an intense effort to control the environment (Schelebusch, 2000). Therefore, it appears that Type A persons should devote careful attention to techniques for coping with stress. If they do, the careers – and lives – they save may well be their own (Cary Cooper, 1992).

What helps is to know what stress is, identify the stressors and their causes in people’s life and how they affect them, and then learn coping skills to deal with them (Schlebusch, 2000). Knowledge about stress is a powerful stress management tool. Recognising this and knowing what stress is, is a first step towards psychological self-empowerment and stress management.

Techniques of coping with work stress depend on the particular stressors themselves i.e. it is only possible effectively to prevent or deal with work stress if one can accurately identify it in a particular situation. The strategy adopted to cope with work stress will depend upon which of the job or organisational stressor(s) described in this chapter is or are operating in the specific work environment. Different job and organisational stressors require different solutions, and only when companies are willing to accept their responsibility and

contemplate carrying out specific organisation 'stress audits' will we begin to deal effectively with work stress.

According to Schlebusch, one can decrease stress by changing your perceptions and thinking, which will lead to different emotions, feelings and behaviour. That is, one can learn to cope with stress and reduce it. How one perceives the stressors in one's life can affect the intensity of the feelings which result from the emotions.

"Unlike cameras, humans care about what they see "(Schlebusch, 2000). Schlebusch is of opinion that the more one regards events as stressful and difficult to control, the more conflicts s/he experiences about them, and the more s/he blames her/himself and feel powerless to change, and the more stress s/he experiences. One ends up in a vicious cycle, one which renders helpless to cope with stress. The key to effective control is to change one's perception, which affects how one thinks about the stress: that way s/he feelings, behaviour and her/his response to stress can change.

5.3.1 PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR COPING WITH STRESS

Strategies based on psychological or behavioural factors have increasingly been very popular. Among these, the one that has probably received the greatest amount of firm support from careful research is the development of networks of social support. A number of studies suggest that persons who possess close, friendly ties with others in their organisations are often better able to cope with job-related stress when it occurs than individuals who lack such support. One reason to this apparently could be because people possessing close ties with others are confident of receiving help in time of need. Consequently, they tend to perceive many situations as less threatening than would otherwise be the case. And as noted earlier, the level of stress experienced in any situation is strongly

affected by cognitive appraisals. Regardless of the specific mechanism involved, however, it is clear that taking the trouble to develop close ties with one's fellow employees can often yield an important bonus – it may arm us with an effective weapon against the onslaught of job-related stress.

Another technique for coping with stress is both simple and effective is to plan ahead and practice time management techniques. In many cases, it appears, individuals expose themselves to much unnecessary stress simply because they have not followed this basic rule. If, instead, they consider what events new situations are likely to involve and what future emergencies are likely to develop, they can prepare themselves for these contingencies. And since being able to predict the occurrence of stressors can sharply lessen their impact, being prepared in this manner can often render these events far less stressful than they actually occur.

Moreover, this helps in good time management which equals to good self-management. People who practice good time management is motivated, interacts well and can handle pressures and stress. Better self-management leads to increased productivity, less stress, greater enthusiasm for work and life and ultimately more time for fun and relaxation. Time itself is not really the stressor, it is the perception and use of time that cause stress.

5.3.2 PHYSICAL STRATEGIES

Lifestyle changes could alleviate problems of stress. Since exposure to intense and prolonged stress can exert harmful effects on health and basic bodily processes, it is therefore reasonable to suggest that factors serving to enhance physical fitness might counteract the impact of stress. A good diet and physical exercise, which are two factors known to enhance physical fitness, have been found to indeed be beneficial to restore equilibrium in the body and mind and aid

in coping with. It has been hypothesised recently that, exercise training and aerobic fitness may exert an effect by altering the way in which we respond to stress. Indeed, physical fitness and exercise, it has been suggested, may afford us protection against the effect of psychological stress (Douglas Carroll, 1992). There is now a reasonably consistent body of evidence to indicate that aerobically fit subjects demonstrate less cardiovascular disruption in the face of psychological stress than unfit subjects.

Stoepe *et al.* (1989) have proved from a study that moderate aerobic exercise programme was associated with reductions in tensions and anxiety, decreases in depression, and increases in perceived ability to cope with stress. Aerobic exercise has proved to have implications for mood and the capacity to cope with stress psychologically. Thus physical exercise reduces life stress and increased physical and mental well-being.

Other techniques for handling stress are to engage in enjoyable activities which enhance the ability to cope with even intense stress, relaxation training and meditation.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Stress today seems to be a global phenomenon and has popularly become a generic term to define any consequences that result from pressures of life. But the conclusion of this research shows that stress does not seem such a big problem in the airline industry in Durban. This may lead to believe that the term 'stress' could be used superfluously, in general. The term is not well defined so that stress is a word that is used too commonly and thus would encompass any pressure, whether insignificant or serious (to the point of manifesting the signs and symptoms) that people encounter in their daily life. Some occasional pressures or stress might not constitute a serious threat to a person and may not

necessarily mean it is stress in such a way that they will exhibit the signs and symptoms of severe stress as described in the literature. However, it does not mean that it is not.

The only way to see who really suffers from stress is through the signs and symptoms exhibited by the person, and this method, as explained below, is not highly reliable.

However, stress is indeed difficult to measure and define, the degrees of stress vary, and there is no appropriate or accurate tool that would permit to measure this. It is again to be noted that it is a complex subject, and there is no objective measuring tool that would quantify or appraise correctly such a subjective feeling. Also, stress is a very personal problem and people do not always want to be completely objective and honest about a problem (especially when they are severely affected), in the same way people do not like to think or admit they have a disease.

May be these are a few areas of research for the future, to investigate and classify various degrees of stress that people could be experiencing, and to know their feelings about their experience of stress. However, knowledge about stress is a first step for people to understand and realise the problem, and which this dissertation, among other things, intended to achieve.

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11 August, 2003

Dear Participant,

I am a student for a Master of Business Administration degree and, in partial requirement for the fulfillment of the degree, I am doing a research on stress in the airline industry. I would thus kindly ask you, and would be very grateful, if you could please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire, and as accurately as possible. All questionnaires will remain anonymous and will be used for academic purposes only. Please kindly deposit the completed questionnaire at the Air Mauritius office at the Durban International Airport on Thursday 14th and Monday 18th of August in the morning when the office is open.

I thank you in advance and rely on your cooperation,
Ashveena Naeck.

Job title:..... **Company Name:**

Section 1	True	Neutral	False
1.1 I would describe the workplace environment unpleasant in general			
1.2 The airport is always too crowded and/or there is too much noise to cope with			
1.3 Customers/passengers can be often very difficult			
1.4 The job requires a lot of patience			
1.5 There is often lack of efficient communication to carry out the job effectively			
1.6 Colleagues and/or superiors / subordinates are generally helpful and cooperative			
1.7 There is a lot of pressure at work in different aspects			
1.8 There is enough support from superiors/subordinates/colleagues			
1.9 My job involves high interaction with people			
1.10 The job I do is worth more than what I am being rewarded			
1.11 I enjoy the work I do, the rewards and benefits are worth the difficulties			
1.12 It is difficult to cope with family responsibilities and work			
1.13 Family or other personal/financial problems tend to bother me a lot during the day			
Section 2			
2.1 I spend almost all of my time thinking about my work			
2.2 I get bored very easily			
2.3 There are many people I could describe as good friends			
2.4 I work primarily because I have to survive, and not necessarily because I enjoy what I do			
2.5 I get upset when things don't go the way I want or expected			

Section 3	Always	Sometimes	Never
Kindly indicate the following:			
1 I suffer from:			
3.1 Anxiety			
3.2 Tiredness			
3.3 Faint or unusually weak for no reason			
3.4 Sleeping disorders			
3.5 Frequent indigestion or other stomach problems			
3.6 Excessive perspiration for no reason			
2 I feel:			
3.8 Helpless			
3.9 Depressed			
3.10 Tense and keyed up			
3.11 That I can't cope			
3.12 Confused			
3.13 Lonely			
3.14 No one understands me			
3.15 Lack of confidence			
3 I suffer from:			
3.17 Memory loss			
3.18 Poor concentration			
3.19 Procrastination			
3.20 Poor time management			
3.21 Need to take work home			
3.22 Increased aggressiveness or irritability			
3.23 Lack of interest in life			
3.24 Difficulty in making up my mind			
3.25 Nail biting			
3.26 Excessive or loss of appetite			
3.27 Fearfulness			
3.28 Greater use of nicotine/alcohol/caffeine to cope			
3.29 Fidgeting			
3.20 The need to cry for no reason			