

# POLI 457 Human Resource Development and Management

## Session 10 – Stress in Organizations

Lecturer: Dr. Bossman E. Asare

Contact Information: [bossasare@gmail.com](mailto:bossasare@gmail.com)/[beasare@ug.edu.gh](mailto:beasare@ug.edu.gh)



# UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

College of Education

**School of Continuing and Distance Education**

2014/2015 – 2016/2017

# Session Overview

This session looks at stress in organizations. We will discuss the causes of stress, the effects on the organization, the individual and how different people experience stress.

# Session Outline

- Topic one : Stress
- Topic two: Effects of Stress

# Reading Materials

- Denhardt, R.B. & Denhardt, J.V., 2009. *Public Administration: An Action Orientation* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). Thomson Wadsworth: USA.
- DeNisi, A. S. & Griffin, R. W., 2008. *Human Resource Management* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Houghton Mifflin Company: USA:
- **John Schermerhorn, James Hunt, and Richard Osborn (2005),** *Organizational Behavior* (9<sup>th</sup> Edition), Wiley.

# Topic one – Stress

- Stress is primarily how people respond to situations that place severe physical, psychological or emotional demands on them. People may react differently to the same information that affect all of them.
- For example, two people can experience the same challenge, but one of them can easily adjust to the challenge while the other person may not be able to do same.
- Stress is not always negative; it can also be positive. We will look at this when we are discussing the effects of stress.

# CAUSES OF STRESS

- DeNisi and Griffin (2008) have noted that, there are four main factors that cause stress in organizations. These are physical demands, task demands, interpersonal demands, and role demands.
- It is important to point out that, other studies also discuss factors that cause stress in organizations, but they do not tend to be different from the four listed here.
- You will also notice that, in the discussions of the factors that cause stress in organizations, some of them will overlap. Now let us turn our attention to the causes of stress in organizations.

# Causes of Stress

- Task demands-the stress associated with the specific job a worker performs. Some jobs demand more from you than other jobs. The jobs of Surgeons, Air Traffic Controllers and Professional Football Coaches obviously are more stressful than those of general practitioners, football players and football team equipment managers.
- There are other task demands that may pose physical risks to you as a person. For example, working in the mines and toxic waste handling. Job Security is another task demand that can cause stress. For instance, someone in a relatively secured job will not worry about being laid off unlike someone who is without job security.
- Overload is another task demand stressor. This occurs when a person has more work to do than he or she can handle. It may be quantitative(when the person has too many or too little tasks to perform) or qualitative(when the person believes he or she lacks the ability to do the job).

- Physical demands relate to the job setting- It deals with many physical aspects of the work environment such as extreme temperatures, poor lighting, office design which may lead to boredom and loading heavy stuff.
- Just imagine a Police Officer directing traffic in the scorching sun. Such an officer will have to be extra alert in order to avoid a situation whereby vehicles will not collide.
- Alternative, those who load and offload a lot of items from cars and stores also experience a lot of physical demands.



- Interpersonal demands are the stresses that come from our associations with other people in the organizations. These can be seen from three dimensions.
- group pressure-pressure to conform to the standards of a group, norms and informal discussions on how they should work. Individuals who do more or less may be pressured by the group to get back in line. The person experiences stress if he or she feels a need to vary from the group and acceptance by the group is important to the individual.
- Leadership style-when an employee feels a strong need to participate in decision making and management but her/his boss refuses to consult subordinates about anything. With this, you will not get the best from your leader and this can bring stress to the individual.
- Conflicting personalities-can occur when two or more people must work together even though they are of different personalities. For example, a type of person who always gets frustrated when working with somebody who enjoys wait and see.

- Role demands- This is the stress that comes from how one should behave when you find yourself in a position in a certain group or organization.
- This usually happens because of role ambiguity (poor orientation), because you may not know what you are allowed to do in your new environment. So when people do not have good orientation, they may end up experiencing stress largely because they are not sure of what they are allowed to do in their new situations.
- When one experiences role conflict in the organization, it can be a source of stress. At times, your responsibilities at work may be in conflict with that of your house or other activities that you equally cherish may conflict with your work schedule.

# Sample questions

- Discuss the causes of stress in modern organizations.
- Examine the assertion that, 'stress is inevitable in organizations'.

# Topic two: Effects of Stress

- There are several consequences of stress in organizations. Here, we will look at the effects on the individual and the organization.
- For individuals, the first effect is that, they begin to demonstrate behaviors that will undermine their persons as well as the organization. For example, some individuals may resort to the use of certain drugs or behaviors that are counterproductive.
- Secondly and relatedly, for some individuals, their actions would lead to accident tendencies that would not augur well for the organization.

- Moreover, it will affect the relationships of individuals as some of them would end up taking certain actions that would affect their close relations.
- Also, it can lead to medical or mental health issues that can potentially escalate to become serious health challenges that some people would struggle to overcome.

- From the perspective of organizations, when workers experience stress on the job, it can reduce productivity since many workers may not be mentally fit to prosecute the agenda of the organization
- Secondly, such organizations are not attractive to people because they know workers experience a lot stress. People will normally join such organizations mainly because they do not have other options on the table.
- It can also affect the motivation of workers.

# Differences in how people experience stress

- There are different ways people experience the same stress they go through. We want to look at some of the reasons why when people experience the same stress, some are able to overcome and others cannot.
- The first is personality- some people are able to overcome stress because of their personality type. We have Type A personality and Type B personality.
- Type A personality -these are people characterized by being highly competitive and highly focused on work with few interests outside of work. Because they are so much devoted to the work, anytime they experience stress on the job, the impact can be severe.

- Type B personality-is a personality feature that is less aggressive, more patient, and more easygoing. These people are less stressful in general than type A persons. This is because they have a lot of things outside the organizations that would engage them.
- Hardiness- this is an individual difference that allows some individuals to experience less stress when dealing with stressful events, and that makes them more effective in dealing with the stress they do experience.



- People who are high in self-esteem easily overcome more than those with low self-esteem.
- Self- confidence- people with more positive outlook on life do not allow things to wear them down as opposed to who have low self confidence.
- Gender is also a variable that explains why people experience stress differently. Men overcome stress better than women.

# Conclusion

- The session has provided an extensive discussion of stress. We have looked at the meaning of stress, the causes of stress and the effects of stress. The session ended with a discussion on how people experience stress.

# Sample questions

- How does stress on the job affect workers?
- Discuss the effects of stress in organizations.
- Why do some people easily adjust to the stress they experience?

# Additional Readings

- Denhardt, R.B. & Denhardt, J.V., 2009. *Public Administration: An Action Orientation* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). Thomson Wadsworth: USA.
- DeNisi, A. S. & Griffin, R. W., 2008. *Human Resource Management* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). Houghton Mifflin Company: USA:
- **John Schermerhorn, James Hunt, and Richard Osborn (2005),** *Organizational Behavior* (9<sup>th</sup> Edition), Wiley.