

INTRODUCTION

In recent years considerable research has been done in the field of occupational stress, its effects on the individual and his attempts to cope with it. The vast literature on occupational stress comes from diverse disciplines, primarily psychiatry, clinical and social psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology and occupational and internal medicine with significant contributions from such widely different fields as behavioral toxicology and personnel management. Even though the primary concern of all these disciplines is with the psychosocial factors contributing to stress, communication between the several fields is the exception and not the rule.

Occupational stress is a subject of increasing importance not only to unions and management but also to health and organization development (OD) experts who are their consultants. Findings of social and behavioral scientists have led to laws being enacted in Sweden and Norway where the employers are required to provide "meaningful work and appropriate job satisfaction with a minimum of occupational stress" (McLean, 1979). In the U.S. the legal systems relating to this subject began with workers compensation statutes and recently has been augmented by the Occupational Safety and Health Act. These deal directly with occupational stress. The statute, which created both the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National

Institute of Occupational Health and Safety contains a specific directive mandating the study of psychologically stressful factors in the work environment.

"If 'stress' or more accurately 'strain' can be said to arise from overstimulation then the bombardment we have suffered from books, magazines, TV and radio about the stressfulness of modern society must in itself have contributed to the condition. We have been shocked by 'Future Shock' (Toffler), aggravated by 'A' Types (Friedmann and Rosenmann, 1974), transported by Transcendental Meditation, bemused by Biorhythms, and amused yet horrified by Joseph Heller's (Toffler) comment that 'Something Happened'. And as Heller eloquently points out, much of whatever it is that caused something to happen, happened at work" (Cooper and Marshall, 1978).

Hans Selye, Director of the International Institute of Stress and a leading authority in the field says, "A respectable job is no protection against stress of life. Stress is with us to stay so we have to learn more about it, through our knowledge we can harness its energy positively to work for us in the best possible way. That is, we must learn to adapt ourselves to enjoy a maximum of Eustress (good stress) and a minimum of Distress" (Selye, 1956).

Even though the term 'stress' originated in the physical sciences, stress concepts have also been used in biology and medicine by Selye as early as 1936. It was only after the

Second World War that the term stress came into wide use in behavioral sciences. During the last two decades the term has started being extensively used in the context of work organizations.

Stress is related to a large number of important physiological, psychological and behavioral conditions and this is the basis for making stress an important focus of research in Industrial Psychology and Organizational Behavior. Schuler (1979) has stated that essentially " stress is too all-encompassing a phenomenon, too large to investigate. Compounding and perpetuating this view of stress is the fact that 'stress' remains a term without conceptualization and without definitional and operational agreement" .

In a rapidly changing technological, scientific and legislative world, the challenge will be to bring contemporary knowledge about occupational stress to an audience of intelligent managers who can translate thoughts into constructive action.

Definition and Conceptualization of Stress in Organization

There is still a great deal not known about stress in organizations, (Zalesnik, Ket de Vires and Howard, 1977 ; Beehr and Newman, 1978 ; House, 1977 ; Cooper and Marshall, 1976); whatever is known about stress, however, shows that the