RST Research and Science Today
WWW.RSTJOURNAL.COM
AUTUMN 2019
No. 2(18)/2019
ISSN-P: 2247-4455 / ISSN-E: 2285-9632

Social Sciences

GENERAL CONCEPT OF STRESS

Costina SFINTEȘ[1]

ABSTRACT:
RECOGNIZING THE EXISTENCE OF STRESS IN ANY HUMAN ACTIVITY AND THE EFFECTS OF THIS COMPLEX PSYCHOSOCIAL PHENOMENON ON WORK PERFORMANCE, HUMAN HEALTH AND THE SPECIFIC CLIMATE OF EACH COMMUNITY, DOUBLED BY IDENTIFYING RELIABLE STRESS MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS, REPRESENTS THE DIRECTION TO BE TAKEN TO LEAD EVERY ORGANIZATION OR NATION.

KEYWORDS: STRESS, FORMS, TYPES, INFLUENCING FACTORS, DEFENSE MECHANISMS

Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language explains the etymology of the word "stress" as having its origin partly in the abbreviation of the English word "distress", partly from the word "narrow" in Old French, which had the meanings of "constraint, suffering", and derived from Latin " strictus ", the past participle of" stringere ", meaning" to pull (from) hard ". The term "stress" can be understood as: tension, pressure, burden, force, effort, stress, tension, constraint, etc.

Over time, there have been various authors who have stated that stress is determined by how we perceive life events. The best known for this thesis is Epictetus, who, referring to happiness and unhappiness, said that the events themselves are not positive or negative, but we are the ones who give them such meanings, and these in turn make us happy or unhappy[2].

Therefore, Epictetus' "unhappiness", meaning fear, anxiety, depression are conditioned by the presence of the respective chemicals secreted in the brain, which, to a certain extent, may be under our control.

Besides Epictetus there were other people who suggested the same thing, for example Cicero, who said that grief does not depend on the negative reality of things, but on an objective judgment of the mind, and as the solid balance of the mind depends on right knowledge, so his troubles are the result of wrong judgments.

Kant also pointed out that the specificity of all mental disorders is the loss of "common sense" and the development of a "private sense" of reasoning.

Bertrand Russell, in an analysis of the causes of happiness and unhappiness, argued that "these can easily be detected in childhood and suggested that the first step to happiness is

[1] Univ.Assist. PhD. , "Constantin Brâncuși" University of Targu Jiu
[2] Ziegler, D. J., Hawley, J.L.. Relation of irrational thinking and the Pessimistic Explanatory Style.Psychological Reports, 88,2,483-8

knowing how to break free from the tyranny of early established beliefs."

Hippocrates, most recently supported by Cl. Bernard (1878-1879) exposes the idea of the organism's ability to maintain its internal living conditions, an idea developed by the American physiologist Walter B. Cannon that introduces the term "homeostasis" indicating this capacity. Cannon demonstrates the existence of numerous specific physiological, enzymatic, endocrine and nerve-specific homeostatic mechanisms that protect the body against disruptive agents.

Considered to be the most important precursor of stress theory, Cannon studies the body's reactions in emergencies and in particular the reaction known as "fight or flight". Because of this reaction, humans, like animals, will choose between fighting or trying to escape the situation that is threatening to them. Cannon experimentally proves the role of adrenaline secretion in adapting the body to environmental stimuli in emergency situations (emergency reactions).

Other scientists, including the Russian physiologist I. P. Pavlov, who discovered the defense mechanisms through conditioned reflexes, with an anticipatory function, made an important contribution to the problem of adaptation, and indirectly of stress.

Sigmund Freud through his theory of defensive neurosis and the unconscious mechanisms of psychological defense played an important role in addressing the concept of stress.

In 1936, without even mentioning the term stress, H. Selye publishes an article about the body's tendency to react stereotypically to different chemical, physical and biological agents, describing this tendency as "general adaptation syndrome" (SGA), including all the nonspecific mechanisms (considered so precisely because they occur in any of the aforementioned triggering agents), capable of ensuring the mobilization of the adaptive resources of the organism in the face of aggression that threatens its morphological integrity or its humoral constants. The genesis of the concept of general adaptation syndrome is related to Selye's observation that completely different diseases, beyond the specific manifestations, have a corollary of common manifestations: altered general condition, inability, digestive disorders, joint and muscle pain, fever etc.

Selye[3] describes three distinct stages of the evolution of general adaptation syndrome:
1) the stage of the alarm reaction, which comprises two phases: "shock" and "counter-shock";
2) the stage of resistance (of recovery or of "prolonged shock");
3) the stage of exhaustion.

In the acute shock phase of the alarm reaction the general resistance of the organism decreases below the average. If the harmful agent is very intense and / or incompatible with life, death occurs, and if the surviving organism installs the shock phase, when the general mobilization of the defense forces of the organism takes place until the installation of a state of resistance with adaptive character and appropriate to the situation data, the body's resistance capacity growing above average. In the stage of resistance the body seems to have adapted to the situation, behaving relatively normally but with the persistence of changes in the counter-shock phase of the alarm reaction. The stage of exhaustion develops if the harmful agent continues to act and the adaptation, obtained with the price of prolonged shock reactions, can no longer be maintained. Resistance drops below average, and once resources are exhausted, life ceases.

Selye explains the three-phase nature of SGA by the fact that the "adaptive energy" of the body is finite and exhaustable. He mentions a surface energy, reversible, and a depth

[3] Selye, Hans, From Dream to Discovery, Bucharest, 1968

energy, finite. This adaptive energy stock is not measurable, but differs widely from individual to individual.

It should be mentioned that regarding the validity of the SGA scheme as a supposed unique mechanism of adaptation and the introduction of the notion of "adaptive energy" as a vital, consumable force, supposed to be genetically programmed into a fixed and immeasurable quantity, several objections have been raised and critics argued.

Any situation that calls for the mechanism of adaptation creates stress, a phenomenon that Selye defines as any response of the organism following any requirement or request exerted on the body by a wide range of causal agents - physical, chemical, biological, mental, etc. In the case of the longer-lasting action of the stressor, this response takes the form of SGA, being able - in extreme cases - to go through the entire range of SGA modifications and completely overlapping its entire "surface".

One aspect of the criticisms of Selye's theory is the exaggerated emphasis on non-specificity and the neglect of specific elements. Today, the three types of specificity are added to the non-specific reactions: situation, personality and response.

In addition to the stress term, Selye also introduces the notion of "adaptive disease". He recognizes that there is no disease whose only and exclusive cause would be stress. But too much stress can cause the body's defense mechanisms to collapse.

Contemporary attempts to define stress in general (regardless of its nature: physical, biological or psychological) have led to a diversification of meanings of the word "stress"[4], understood as:

a) element of the external world inducing a reaction of intense constraint of the human being;

b) physiological reaction process induced by these external aggressions;

c) imbalance between the external demands and the possibilities of the body to deal with them.

Selye says that stress has several fundamental components, such as:

a) stressors (sources of stress);

b) stress reactions and / or its consequences;

c) individual features that mediate stress behavior.

Stress symptoms can be classified into:

a) physical (headaches, cardiovascular disorders, gastrointestinal deficiencies, allergies, dermatological problems, sleep and breathing disorders, etc.);

b) psychological (emotional and cognitive problems, such as job dissatisfaction, depression, anxiety, boredom, frustration, isolation, resentment, etc.);

c) behavioral: - those concerning the person (avoidance of work, use of alcohol and drugs, exaggerated or diminished appetite for food, aggression towards colleagues or family members, interpersonal problems, etc.);

- those with organizational impact (absenteeism, professional fluctuation, predisposition to accidents, low productivity, etc.)

Several types of stress are described in the specialized literature: environmental stress, having as main factors noise, heat / cold, trepidation, air pollution, radiation, etc.); gravitational stress, with the main factors being weight and acceleration; urban stress, having as main factors noise, agglomeration, pollution; hyperbaric stress, with the main factor being high atmospheric pressure; technostress, with the main factor being information overload; prenatal and neonatal stress, with the main factor being hypoxia.

[4] Sillamy, Norbert, Dictionary of psychology, Encyclopedic Ed., Bucharest, 1998

Selye describes stress as having four fundamental variations, arranged on two dimensions: distress vs. eustresus and hyperstres. hipostresul. The term "eustres" refers to the level of moderate, optimal psycho-Eurouroendocrine stimulation, which maintains the person's physical and mental balance and tone, health status and induces a positive adaptation to the environment. Stress that exceeds a critical intensity, the value of which varies widely from individual to individual, is designated by the term "distressed". The distress is caused by overloads, intense and prolonged over-stimulation, which exceed the personal physiological and psychological resources, resulting in decreased performance, dissatisfaction, psychosomatic and physical disorders[5]. The term "hyperstres" refers to a level of over-stimulation that goes beyond the limits of adaptability, leading from the over-demanding of adaptive mechanisms to their exhaustion, while the term "hyperstrings" means a level of under-stimulation that leads to a lack of self-realization manifested by immobility. physical, boredom and sensory deprivation.

Selye's classification is supplemented by other authors with other types of stress and stress agents, using various criteria. Thus, acute or short-term stress (minutes, hours) and chronic or long-term stress (days, months) are differentiated; cumulative (longitudinal) and multiple (transversal) or independent stress; major, minor and potential stressors; central and peripheral stressors; informational stress; continuous and discontinuous stressors, respectively intermittent, and on the other hand, single or repeated stressors; physical and psychological or mental and social agents, and there are combined forms.

Although stress is by no means a new phenomenon, however, it is becoming more and more globalized and affects both all countries, all socio-professional categories, as well as family and society in general. The factors that affect the vulnerability to stress can be: personality, age, gender, level of economic development, etc.

M. Friedman and RH Rosenman, American cardiologists, after research, showed that there is a close link between stress, the frequency of cardiovascular disease and personality type, while identifying two major types of personality A and B and an intermediate type, AB.

Personality frequently affects how the individual responds to stress and also changes the impact of stress on the body. For some people, stress is a part of their lives. Everyone has seen such people who watch their clock all the time nervously or who, desperately, ring desperately from the car. The people who behave like this are representatives of the type A personality, a structure characterized by restlessness, agitation and a counter-chronometer working style. Unlike them, a person who manifests type B behavior is generally slow, contemplative and relaxed.

The people belonging to type A focus on higher achievements, they are very competitive, intolerant and even aggressive when they are having difficulties. However, in excess, type A - denotes high levels of stress, thus leading to health problems. In some studies performed on women, those with type A behavior were found to be 4 times higher than those of type B, with regard to heart disease.

Not all stress specialists like the idea that the two types in this way can be connected with or without the presence of health problems. Some experts have identified a personality trait, called **a character series** that can mitigate the effects of stress. Strong individuals manifest three fundamental personality traits, they tend to become strongly involved in what they do, usually act with the conviction that through their work they will do something different and perceive most changes in life as beneficial and normal for personal development.

[5] Thoits, Hannam, Ursin, Murison, op.cit. 14, p.31

Due to their strong sense of self-efficacy, individuals with strong personality are able to withstand stress. Some specialists consider that strength of character acts as a buffer against the disease. The strong character as personality trait correlates with low blood pressure, low levels of fatty acids in the blood, reduced psychological tension and an increased state of happiness.

From the administration of numerous personality tests, three characteristics of the strong characters have resulted:

• Agreement. They are dedicated to their work, family, and other important values.

• Control. They have a sense of control over their lives.

• Challenge. It addresses changes in life as opportunities for self-testing.

Age. From the research carried out on a sample of managers aged between 30-60 years, it was found that they feel the influence of organizational stress in the family, in variable proportions and dependent on the age groups:

• 58% of those in the age group 30-40 years;

• 46% of those aged 41–50;

• 38% those over 50 years old.

In other words, the pressures from the family come precisely during the period, at the age at which the person is on the upward curve of professional aspirations and work potential.

It has been shown that, in general, young age (up to 40 years) due to the increased resistance capacity of the body acts as a stress reliever.

The stressors specific to the organization generate a nervous tension that affects the employees employed regardless of sex. However, there is a difference, namely in the reaction mode. In a state of stress, the woman can become passive, disoriented, marked by a strong sense of guilt, manifesting the tendency of underestimation and withdrawal. The stress response of the man is different, he reacting by aggression, nervousness, disregard of social norms and values, showing the obvious tendency to deflate and to unload nervously.

If the woman holds a management position, we could observe the existence of specific situations that can easily be transformed into stressors, namely:

• the conflict of professional and family role generated by the desire to solve many and very different tasks;

• absence of support from both family and colleagues or female subordinates;

• reduced chances of relaxation after a day's work, compared to those of men, which causes physical fatigue, etc.

If, a few years ago **the professional categories** considered by definition stressful were: test pilots, air traffic controllers, cosmonauts, railway workers and doctors, especially surgeons; Today, the list has been expanded by adding among others: policemen, magistrates, miners, managers and economists. Within organizations, employees in the accounting, sales and supply departments are more exposed to organizational stress than those from other departments.

Regarding **the level of qualification** it can be said that unlike unskilled workers, people with higher education are frequently subject to role conflicts, hardly tolerating role ambiguity.

An interesting study was conducted by Gallup Company regarding the relationship between stress and **the size of the organization**. The study was conducted on a sample of 845 American managers grouped by size of organization, its result indicating that the relationship between the level of managerial stress and the size of the organization is inversely proportional.

Thus, in the simplest way, stress is the reaction that any person can have when they cannot adapt to the demands, responsibilities and expectations that they have to face in their personal life, family or work place. Its recognition, coupled with the identification of reliable

stress management solutions, represents the direction to be followed by each organization or nation.

REFERENCES

1. *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*. - New York / Avenel: Gramercy Books, 1994.
2. **Hinkle, L.E**. *The Concept of Stress in the Biological Social Sciences Stress Medicine and Man*. - 1973.
3. **Zlate, M**. *Introduction to psychology* / ed. 2nd (revised and added). Bucharest: Publishing House and Press "Şansa" S.R.L., 1996.
4. **Voicu, C**. *Typological features of the nervous system in the context of theoretical, methodological and applicative research* // The journal of psychology. - 1994. - T. 40. - Nr. 4.
5. **Selye, H**. *The stress of life*. - New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956.
6. **Derevenco, P., Anghel, I., Băban, A**. *Stress in health and illness: from theory to practice*. - Cluj-Napoca: Dacia Publishing House, 1992.
7. **Selye, H**. *The stress of my life*. - Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977.
8. **Selye, H**. *The stress of life* / (revised edition). - New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.
9. **Selye, H.** *Stress in Health and Desease*. - Boston: Butterworth, 1976.
10. **Selye, H**. *The General Adaptation Syndrome and the Diseases of Adaptation* // Journal of Clinical Endocrinology. – 1946.