

**Ragif Tofiq HUSEYNOV, ph.d.****Shafa Shahin HUSEYNOVA**

Graduate student of Azerbaijan University of Technology

E-mail: [shafakamran@gmail.com](mailto:shafakamran@gmail.com)

## STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

### Abstract

There are many causes of stress, including personal difficulties (e.g. conflict with loved ones, being alone, lack of income, worries about the future), problems at work (e.g. conflict with colleagues, an extremely demanding or insecure job) or major threats in your community (e.g. violence, disease, lack of economic opportunity). The stress became part of everyday life for the modern society. It affects our lifestyle and the outcomes of the communication. That is why for the companies and employed people, who care about the work efficiency and own well-being, my research is meaningful. The effort which is needed to accomplish the tasks in order to prevent stress intervention seems enormous. The purpose of this study is to determine the main causes and consequences of stress at work, to find the most effective ways to prevent and deal with it. This study can also be helpful in terms of preparing students for the challenging working life in their future life.

**Key words:** stress, eustress, distress, cope with stress, time budget.

**UOT: 331**

**JEL:L29**

### Introduction

Perhaps never before life haven't been as stressing as in the third millennium or perhaps each one of use has the tendency to appreciate his "time" as an apogee of all tasks. In modern life conditions our capacity to adapt is more and more asked for. The quality of adaptive answers is permanently subdued to new exigencies: the growth of intellectual worked up behaviours; the increase of social competition; the necessity of taking important decisions in a very short time; and time elapses in a different way in "speed's century". Before time wasn't that short, the fight for existence that violent, the people that nervous. Time had become a mainspring of everyone. It is present everywhere, starting with economic medium, where it identifies with gain and ending with relaxing moments, it seems time is never enough. Captured between the desire of enjoying our spare time and the desire of fulfilling our professional duties we found ourselves fighting, of course, against time, fighting against us. The tensions that follow from this fight, that has time as common denominator have repercussions on us, causing a succession of psycho-conductor alterations, varying from confusions and depressions to

aggressive answers or, on the contrary, to blocking answers.

The stress is, nowadays, intensely studied, the beginning been made especially in the inter-war period, when stress was appreciated as a mass phenomenon, as a disease of great extension, generated by the complexity and accelerated rhythm of social life. The word stress comes from Latin word "stringere" which means to embrace, to injure and that gave birth to French word "detresse" and to English word "stress". The later signifies the notion of compulsion, of force, of solicitation and designates any aggression coming from the environment or any tensional mood created by that.

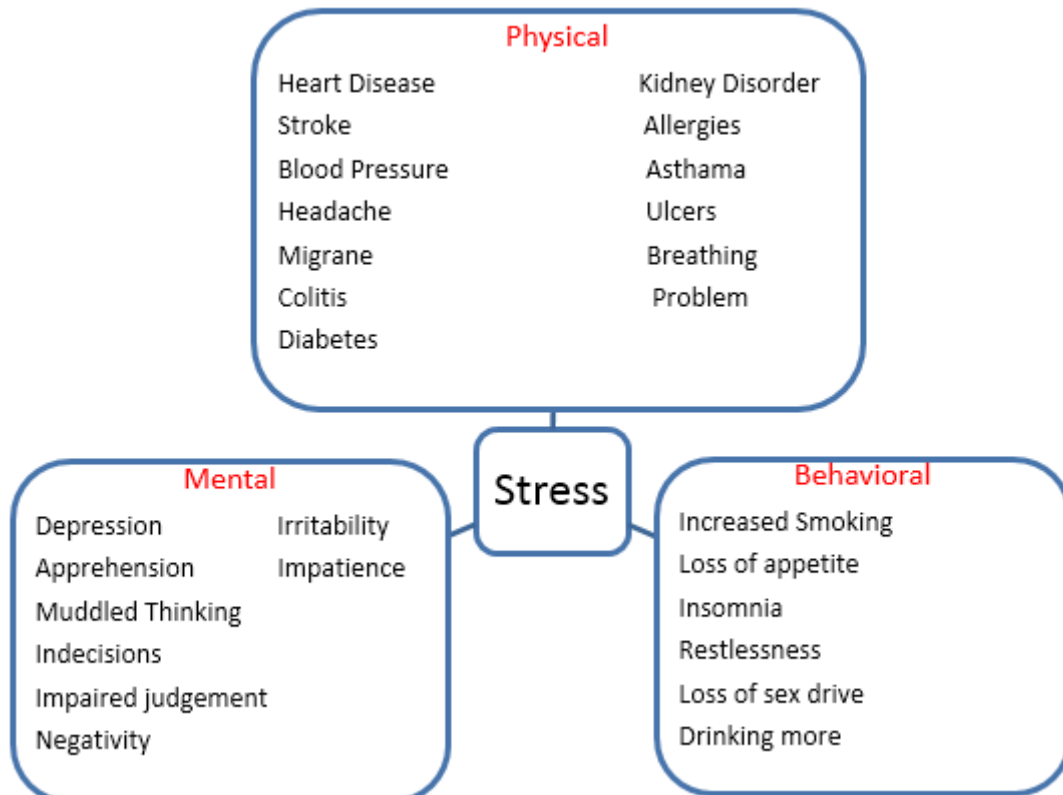
To stress means, generally speaking, "any force that applied to a system causes important changes of it's shape, usually with the connotation that change is a deformation. The term is used regarding body, social and psychological shape" (Brate, 2002, p. 86). In other scientists' conception stress is defined as "the person's reaction at situations or events that ruins or threat to ruin his physiological or mental equilibrium; a physiological or mental mood, as answer to a stressor (person, situation,

event from the environment).” (Ilub, Chelcea, coord., 2004, p. 348).

According to other theory, “stress is a discrepancy subjectively perceived between the environment’s tasks and self-evaluation of one’s own capacities” (Lazarus, Folkman, 1984). To forestall each person ways to adapt in different situations there have to be known both the stressors and the individual resources, looked as expression of personality’s efficiency. As it is revealed out of Selye’s conception, stress sends not to the situation that caused the tension mood, but to the organism’s reaction: “Not what happens is important, but the way you react”. The differences between the persons’ reactions, as expression of their psychical features, become even more discernible when the persons are in time crisis, when the tasks are even more petitioner and thus trough their ampleness, duration and complexity put to the test the psychical and physiological functional capacities of persons. “The same stressors causes negative stress to some (distress), positive stress to others (eustress) and leave impassive others”. The personality’s features

concretize in certain adaptive styles and the research of correlations between personality’s features and the conduct in difficult situations, caused by activities’ solicitations made evident the adaptive ways characteristic to certain types of personality.

A growing number of health care professionals are saying that a laugh a day may help keep the doctor away! Yes, you read that correctly – humor and laughter can cause a domino effect of joy and delight, as well as set off a number of positive health benefits. Stress is a reality more than present nowadays and has numerous effects (See Figure 1). The cues frequently used: “I’m overworked”, “I’m stressed” are very strong arguments in this sense. In these conditions terms as stress or neurosis pass from the scientific language to the daily one. Being stressed means to feel overwhelmed of circumstances without knowing what to do. Stress, although seems something regular, inevitable, still when we are stressed we solve harder our problems or make decisions.



**Figure 1. Effects of Stress**

In work activity stress appears as a consequence of insufficient psychical resources

to face the tasks and professional exigencies. In this case we speak of occupational stress which

is often considered to have a good character to employees' performances; this is defined as eustress and mobilize the individual resources. It's opposite is called distress, it's effects affecting negative the health (Jurcău, Moldovan, 2003). The psychological stress could be defined as an interaction modality between person and environment, involving the person's confrontation with a situation that threatens his good mood and integrity, concretized in a tensioned disposition generated by the frustration or repress of motivation moods (needs and aspirations) or by the difficulty to solve certain problems.

**Materials and methods.** The research's purpose concerns the investigation on how the people use their time budget, more precisely how they use their time within a working day and a rest day (24 hours). The study has as object exhibiting a succession of findings made up from real investigation. The present research's objects are multiple and various. As main objects we found: clearing up machineries of growing up stress level against the restriction of spare time; grasping aspects of relation between the spare time volume and the volume of time spent to solve job's tasks; the analysis of time budget's structure; proving that individual differences from subject's answers are signs of their personality's particularities.

The study revealed the main factors that cause stress in our country. Therefore, it is recommended that there is the need for management to show they take stress seriously and therefore understand towards employees who admit to being under stress. There is also the need for the employer to have improved communication by sharing information with employees to reduce uncertainty about their jobs security and future prospects and also by clearly defining employees roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the employer should reassure employees by providing opportunities for their career development and also give employees more control over their work.

**The organisation and stress management.** The stress management can be seen as an attempt to vary the subordinates level of stress towards an optimum point to achieve the maximum performance, avoiding the mental

traumas associated with excessive stress. In this process are included: the estimation of self position on stress-performance curb; the constant and active evaluation of person and environment to identify the potential stress sources, selecting and adopting the most adequate strategies to diminish stress' effects; the efficiency's evaluation of those strategies.

Management can be defined as an important social technique, as guidance and control of efforts of a group of persons in order to achieve a common goal. "A good manager is the one that makes it's group to achieve the goals in terms of a minimum expense of resources and efforts" (Mackensie, 1969, after Cornescu, Mihăilescu, Stanciu, 2003, p. 2). Each person invested with managing responsibility at one level or other showed a specific way in thinking and acting. Style, in the context of psychosocial approach, means behaviour constant and consistency in thoughts and actions. A competent manager reveals his qualities of leader especially in tensioned situations. His will stir up the others, his power reverberates in the persons he leads to achieve the organisation's (economic or normative – schools, army) goals.

Managing stress differential and nuance, helped by adequate strategies, the leader can help the subordinates to change the perception upon the tasks and to adapt it to their capacities. People react different in front of same stressors due to different perception of it's nature and also due to their different capacities to confront them. That's why the leader, as stress' manager should introduce the task differentiated, depending on the person's position on the stress-performance curve. When the personal performance is satisfying and there aren't any signs of wrong function the stress' level mustn't be adjusted.

A stress management more active should be applied when the leader plans his activities or when there are bigger or smaller signs of stress. In managing stress it is important the recognition of stress signs and decipher it's significations. Among stress signs we enumerate: incapacity to sleep or sleep without rest; irritability; the growth or the diminution of appetite; suddenly burst into tears; the lack of control and patience; confusion; the feeling that things aren't going well; difficulties in working

with others; constant task of perfection for self and others (Vernon, 2006, p. 58). At the same should understand that the number of signs and their frequencies determine the extent of somebody's stress level; a frequent sign shouldn't worry, but more signs felt frequent and during a long period of time indicate a real problem.

Stress management involves using "healthy" techniques and "unhealthy" techniques. The healthy techniques demand for using reason in behaviour, acting by anticipating a problem and achieving steps to impede the development of event or minimizing its effects by taking on preventive measures. The rational thinking might be a good way to reduce the intensity of a stressor. "If we use time to think and establish priorities, some things would be unavoidable postponed and other even eliminated" (Wood, Tolley, 2003, p. 43). The majority of techniques to adapt to stress accentuate especially the cognitive dimension of behaviour: on one hand the situation's evaluation, on the other hand the behaviour register, which the varied it is, the more growth the chances of an efficient adaptation. The cognitive training to adapt stress has as goal to eliminate or to minimize the stress sensation by teaching the person to call, any time he needs, a pattern of rational analysis. In difficult situations we needn't to react which involves not to anticipate the problem and as a consequence to react after it had occurred. The "unhealthy" techniques (cigarettes, alcohol, drugs) aren't so useful because they often brought an increase of stress level causing a series of negative effects.

The leader can use three ways to accomplish stress management: 1. The manipulation of perception and present tasks on subordinates (strategies regarding the requirements); 2. The evaluation and, subsequent, the improvement of present perception on subordinates' capacities (strategies regarding the capacities); 3. The attenuation of dysfunctional answers of subordinates (physiological, mental and conductor answers – strategies of moulding).

The stress management general procedure starts when the leader, through varied evaluation methods, establishes that the level of individual stress is not at the optimum of performance. Generally speaking, if the leader notices the

stress level is too reduced, he can increase the tasks to such a point that demands overcome the capacities. On the other hand, if the demands excess is dysfunctional, the leader should investigate the probable causes and to reduce the demands to a tolerable level or he could improve the subordinates self perception about their capacities. A third option is to try to relief the stress effects, focusing even on the demands, even on capacities or answers or any other combination.

The stress management strategies can focus on subordinates' capacities, on observing and stimulating/ accelerating subordinates' abilities to accomplish their tasks. This strategies are usually focused either on adopting/amending subordinates' abilities through training, or on attempt to improve self-confidence to accomplish the task. In most cases the leader may influence the requirements to discharge the employees' duties either by specifying the ways to accomplish the requirements either by imposing the performance's standards, but the growth of requirements' level is more tolerable if it is made gradually. A relevant example about the effect of changing the performance's standards is the preparation for an athletic competition. The performance's levels growth progressively to the optimal physical condition, corresponding to capacities and demands.

Another source of manipulating by requirements that leader may use is to negotiate resources' assignment to execute the tasks. It is not a custom leader to hold back deliberately the resources to produce stress; anyway time constrains can be used to manipulate the demands' level. If the leader ignores comments such as: "I can do that, but I need more time!" there is the possibility of dysfunctional stress. Sometimes a demand like: "We must do this report immediately!", may diminish subordinates' lethargy/ inertia, improving their performance. Changing the demand or the procedures to achieve the demand could be major sources of stress, controllable by leader. The subordinates tend to see the change as overwhelming their abilities, especially if the current procedure was installed for a long time.

Among the important psychological factors in preventing and combating stress an essential role is hold by the high perception of personal

efficiency, a person's belief that he or she can accomplish a specific task. Such beliefs influence the person's behaviour, generating more perseverance in front of obstacles and frustrations and, implicit, more chances to reach success.

**How to Reduce, Prevent, and Cope with Stress.** Stress is a natural part of the human experience. In fact, stress can provide motivation and increase our performance. Psychological stress is known to suppress the immune system, making us more susceptible to illness. Stress is also associated with hypertension, heart disease, headaches, and cancer. Prolonged stress can also trigger depression, anxiety, and other psychological symptoms. It may seem that there's nothing you can do about stress. The bills won't stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day, and your career and family responsibilities will always be demanding. But you have more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you're in control of your life is

the foundation of stress management. Managing stress is all about taking charge – of your thoughts, emotions, schedule, and the way you deal with problems. Stress is an internal reaction to events and circumstances that challenge us to make changes in our lives.

Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in your life. This isn't as easy as it sounds. Your true sources of stress aren't always obvious, and it's all too easy to overlook your own stress-inducing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It may seem that there's nothing you can do about stress. The bills won't stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day, and your career and family responsibilities will always be demanding. But you have more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you're in control of your life is the foundation of stress management. Managing stress is all about taking charge: of your thoughts, emotions, schedule, and the way you deal with problems. See below the best stress management plan (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Best Stress Management Plan**

According to the research, some employees agreed stress had a negative effect on their performance and their attitude towards work. To help address these, the employer must take seriously what employees say about the pressures of their work. The signs of stress must also be taken seriously. The employer also needs to ensure employees have the skills, training and resources they need, so they will be able to work in a relaxed atmosphere and not feel too pressured. To prevent stress, it is

necessary to vary working conditions and ensure flexibility in the work environment. Managers on the other hand, must know the effects of stress and attach the necessary urgency, because if stress is not checked it will have a negative effect on their job satisfaction and attitude to work.

#### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Stress is part of everyone's life. Stress means different things to different people, and what causes stress for one person may not cause it for

another. Stress is not always bad. For example, very positive events like weddings, the birth of a grandchild, and starting or ending a job can cause stress. Some stress can help make your life interesting and exciting, but too much stress, or stress that continues for too long, can have a negative impact on your body and your mind. If not managed properly, stress can lead to illness, increased blood glucose levels, increased anxiety, or depression and mood swings.

The World Organization of Health placed, as far back as in last years, at forehead on the list of diseases with growing spread coefficient, the psychical affections. Stress lies at the ground of many such diseases, often incurable. One of the areas in which stress may appear, showing itself, is the professional area. At work stress appears when the professional exigencies overcame the resources the human being dispose it. The professional stress is determined by the person's impact with physical and intellectual work process.

Most interventions to reduce the risk to health associated with stress in the workplace involve both individual and organisational approaches. Individual approaches include training and one-to-one psychology services-clinical, occupational, health or counselling. They should aim to change individual skills and resources and help the individual change their situation. However, the prevention and management of workplace stress requires organisational level interventions, because it is the organisation that creates the stress. An approach that is limited to helping those already experiencing stress is analogous to administering sticking plaster on wounds, rather than dealing with the causes of the damage. An alternative analogy is trying to run up an escalator that's going down! Organisational interventions can be of many types, ranging from structural (for example, staffing levels, work schedules, physical environment) to psychological (for example, social support, control over work, participation).

Stress is not only the result of major events, but also of daily tensions and pressures. The later, through their frequencies, have an important part in professional environment and affects more the person than the rarely major

negative events. This session explores the causes of stress and how participants deal with stress. Participants learn ways of reducing stress by streamlining their physical activity, making time to relax, getting plenty of sleep, and having a good laugh. Participants examine how they are spending their time each day and brainstorm ways to improve their time-management. There are several relaxation techniques that help reduce stress. These techniques bring on the "relaxation response" where your body enters a state of calmness. Using these relaxation techniques can help reduce stress and tension, lower blood pressure and blood glucose, relieve tension, and improve sleep. Learning to deal with stress in a positive manner can help you to greatly improve your health!

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**Рагиф Тофиг оглу ГУСЕЙНОВ, к. э. н.**

**Шафа Шахин кызы ГУСЕЙНОВА**

Азербайджанский Технологический Университет

E-mail: [shafakamran@gmail.com](mailto:shafakamran@gmail.com)

## СТРАТЕГИИ УПРАВЛЕНИЯ СТРЕССОМ

### Резюме

Существует много причин стресса, в том числе личные трудности (например, конфликт с близкими, одиночество, отсутствие дохода, беспокойство о будущем), проблемы на работе (например, конфликт с коллегами, чрезвычайно требовательная или небезопасная работа) или серьезные угрозы в вашем обществе (например, насилие, болезни, отсутствие экономических возможностей). Таким образом, стресс стал частью повседневной жизни современного общества. Он влияет на наш образ жизни и результаты общения. Поэтому исследования в этой статье могут оказаться полезными для компаний и работающих людей, которым важна эффективность работы и собственное благополучие. Некоторые задачи требуют больших усилий, чтобы избежать стрессовых помех. Целью данного исследования является определение основных причин, последствий стресса на рабочем месте, и выявить наиболее эффективные пути предотвращения и борьбы со стрессом. Это исследование также может быть полезным для подготовки студентов к трудной трудовой жизни, которая их ожидает.

**Ключевые слова:** стресс, эустресс, бедствие, справляться со стрессом, бюджет времени.

**Raqif Tofiq oğlu HÜSEYNOV, i.f.d.**

**Şəfa Şahin qızı HÜSEYNOVA**

Azərbaycan Texnologiya Universitetinin magistrantı

E-mail: [shafakamran@gmail.com](mailto:shafakamran@gmail.com)

## STRESS İDARƏETMƏ STRATEGİYALARI

### Xülasə

Stressin bir çox səbəbi var, o cümlədən şəxsi çətinliklər (məsələn, yaxınlarınızla münaqişə, tək qalmaq, gəlirin olmaması, gələcəklə bağlı narahatlıqlar), işdəki problemlər (məsələn, həmkarları ilə münaqişə, həddindən artıq tələbkar və ya etibarsız iş) və ya icmanızdakı əsas təhlükələr (məsələn, zorakılıq, xəstəlik, iqtisadi imkanların olmaması). Beləliklə, stress müasir cəmiyyətin gündəlik həyatının bir hissəsinə çevrilib. Bu, həyat tərzimizə və ünsiyyətimizin nəticələrinə təsir göstərir. Buna görə də, işin səmərəliliyinə və öz rifahına əhəmiyyət verən müəssisələr və orada işləyən insanlar üçün bu məqalədəki araşdırmalar faydalı hesab oluna bilər. Stressə müdaxilənin qarşısını almaq üçün müəyyən tapşırıqların yerinə yetirilməsi böyük say tələb edir. Beləliklə, bu tədqiqatın məqsədi iş yerində stressin əsas səbəblərini və nəticələrini müəyyən etmək, onun qarşısının alınması və onunla mübarizə aparmağın ən təsirli yollarını tapmaqdır. Bu tədqiqat həm də tələbələri onları gözləyən çətin iş həyatına hazırlamaq üçün faydalı ola bilər.

**Açar sözlər:** stress, eustress, sıxıntı, stressin öhdəsindən gəlmək, vaxt büdcəsi.