Occupational stress and job satisfaction among beginner teachers in secondary schools in Kuching-Samarahan Division, Sarawak.

By

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A thesis submitted

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the

Degree of Master in Science

(Human Resource Development)

Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SARAWAK

DECEMBER 2000
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or other university or institute of higher learning

Pengakuan

Diakui bahawa tesis ini adalah hasil kerja penyelidik sendiri dan tiada bahagian tesis ini telah dikemukakan untuk menyokong sesuatu permohonan untuk mendapatkan sesuatu kelayakan ijazah di universiti ini atau institusi pengajian tinggi yang lain
SPECIAL DEDICATION

(DEDIKASI KHAS)

To

(Kepada)

Yeo Aii Joo; Most Passionate & Understanding Wife,
Choo Ah Leek & Lim Nyonya; My beloved parents,
Yeo Kee Soon & Lee Nyet Khim; My respected in-laws

(Yeo Aii Joo; Isteri Tercinta,
Choo Ah Leek & Lim Nyonya; Ayah dan Bonda yang dikasihi
Yeo Kee Soon & Lee Nyet Khim; Mertua yang dihormati)

And All Those That Have Contributed For This Success

(Dan Semua Yang Telah Menyumbang terhadap Kejayaan Ini)

Thank You

(Terima Kasih)
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I wish to thank my wife, parents and in-laws for the understanding and support to further my studies. This dream was also made possible with the encouragements of my teaching colleagues.

To my supervisor, Ms. Angela Anthonysamy, I wish to express my deepest appreciation for her patience and guidance. I definitely could not have completed this dissertation without her help. Thank you for pointing out all my shortcomings and for the guidance given.

To our program coordinators, Dr. Sharifah Meriam (IAB), Mr. Philip Anding and Mr. Abang Ekhsan Abang Othman (UNIMAS), many thanks for sharing all the useful experiences, guidance, encouragements and assistance as to ensure each and every member of the cohort successfully complete this program.

To my cohort members, thanks for all the understanding moments and experiences that we had gone through together.

To all the beginner teachers who have participated in this research, I am very thankful for the cooperation and time given to enable this research to be possible.

To all whom I have not mentioned in helping me complete this dissertation ...

THANK YOU.

Choo Thiam Choy
December 2000
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of occupational stress and job satisfaction among beginner teachers in the Kuching-Samarahan Division, Sarawak. Factors causing the occupational stress and job satisfaction were also identified and ranked. In addition, a correlation between job satisfaction and occupational stress among beginner teachers were conducted. Demographic characteristics such as gender, marital status, category of teachers, location of school and years of teaching experience differences and beginner teachers occupational stress were tested to determine if there were any significant differences. The samples consisted of 200 beginner teachers from 20 secondary schools grouped under the Kuching-Samarahan Division in Sarawak. This study found out that 85.7% of the beginner teachers in Kuching-Samarahan Division were moderately stressful to stressful level in their occupation. However, the beginner teachers indicated a high level of job satisfaction. There were no significant differences between beginner teachers occupational stress and demographic characteristics except for years of teaching experience. Student domain and external (to school) domain were identified as the main stressors. Interestingly, student domain listed six factors among the ten most prevailing stressors. Colleague relationships and supervision carried out by school administrators were indicated as their main job satisfaction factors. Overall, the result of the study has shown a weak negative relationship between job satisfaction and occupational stress. It can be concluded that beginner teachers indicated an inversely relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction.
ABSTRAK

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Stress is part of everyday life. Everyone needs to face challenges in order to get as much out of life as they can. Stress is also usually understood as a necessary reaction and appropriate way for any individual faced with threatening situations. Studies on stress have often been carried out among professions such as counselors, teachers, lecturers, social workers, doctors, nurses, psychologists, police and other professionals that provide social services to the society. The public services offered by these professions require a high level of competency in performing their job. Teachers in schools usually play different roles in carrying out their responsibilities that are sometimes contrasting and complementary. Such roles in their job also demand a need for communication skills to interact with the public, positive attitude and personality, high level of patience and capabilities in solving a variety of problems faced. The danger is that some of these challenges are more difficult to handle or overcome. If these challenges are not dealt with, they can cause high levels of negative stress.

The declining morale of teachers, the number of teachers leaving the profession and the prevalence and influence of stress are characterizing the current negative conditions in the teaching profession. In every teacher's effort to fulfill the great promise of teaching, the reward to personnel satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment were actually dampened by the growing tensions and unrealistic demands on the profession.

Studies done on the educational institutions suggest that teaching is a stressful profession (Coates & Thoreson, 1976; Hunter, 1977; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978; Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1979; Smilansky, 1984). Kyriacou & Sutcliffe (1978) in a study of 700 comprehensive school teachers in England found that 25 per cent of the samples recorded their job to be "very stressful" and "extremely stressful". It is obvious that the implication of such studies throw concern on staff reactions to work pressure and the effects of stress on teachers' health and well-being. Blix, Cruise, Mitchell & Blix (1994) pointed that occupational stress is considered to be one of the ten leading work-related health problems.

Occupational stress experienced among beginner teachers at secondary schools was usually neglected despite the fact that they represent a group vulnerable to burnout. McGrath, Houghton, & Reid (1989) verified in their study that occupational stress is the main contributor to the high stress level in teachers. Teaching and learning process would also be affected with teachers not being able to perform their best potentials. Thus, job satisfaction towards the teaching profession may not be fulfilled. These outcomes may have a great impact on the teachers, students and the educational organisation. It is therefore necessary to identify the sources and domains of job related pressure, in order to structure constructive measures. Interestingly, only few studies have examined occupational stress among beginner teachers and job satisfaction (Thompson, 1971; Taylor & Dale, 1971).

1.1 Background of the study

As for beginner teachers, the effect of professional pressures and being able to adapt themselves to the new and actual teaching conditions in schools seems to be a challenge that is inevitable. Most teachers agree that the beginning years in the profession are the most
difficult path in a teacher’s career. The transition from teacher training to the first teaching job could be a dramatic and traumatic one. There seems to be a need for acknowledgement as a compatible teacher and responsibility to be able to acquire the true realization of the role of being a teacher and the myriad responsibilities that go with it. This includes the responsibilities to students, teacher colleagues, parents, schools administrators, community and also to themselves.

According to Spielberger (1979), coping with stress and anxiety is an everyday requirement for normal human growth and development. As a beginner teacher, going into a new job for the first time, being separated from parents and loved ones, doubting one’s own adequacy in relations with other people, job pressures and deadlines, speaking or entertaining in public are among the many potential sources of stress. Fogarty, Wang and Creek (1982) noted that beginner teachers were less able to attend to spontaneous student responses and to cues from the class as a whole than were experienced teachers, but instead were very sensitive to student behaviors that could disrupt their planned presentation.

Veenman (1984) reviewed 83 international studies on the perceived problems of beginner teachers in their first years of teaching and eight most perceived problems were identified. The problems were classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing students’ work, relationships with parents, organisation of class work, insufficient and/or inadequate teaching materials and supplies, and dealing with problems of individual students. Veenman (1984) further pointed that being an initiation into the profession, the first year of teaching is also an initiation into the adult world with its responsibilities such as living away from home, looking for new accommodation, making new friends, and raising a family. From the freedom of student life the beginner teacher is moved to the restrictions and responsibilities of professional life (McDonald & Elias, 1983, Ryan, 1980) making the first year a period of immense learning.

There appear to be a variety of problems that contribute to making the beginning years most difficult in a teacher’s career. Many academic tasks are demanding and therefore induce some strain. Gold and Roth (1993) argued that workload can seem overwhelming to the novice teacher. These include administrative and logistical matters such as attendance, state regulation paperwork, and school district record-keeping requirements. These are in additions to the major workload element of preparing for lessons, grading papers, and developing long-range curriculum plans. A moderate level of stress usually contributes to the potential development of an individual. However, excessive and unremitting stress may lead to maladaptive behavior. When a beginner teacher is unable to cope with stress and frustration, they will eventually build a negative perspective in the teaching profession. Knowledge of the problems faced by beginner teachers in their first year of teaching may provide important information for the improvement and redesigning of pre-service and in-service programs.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Studies on stress among teachers have been increasingly carried out in Malaysia. (Siti Rohani, 1991; Suseela, 1994; Junaidah, 1995; Tan, 1996; Vickneasvari , 1997; Mokhtar, 1998; Safinat, 1998; Chan, 1999). However, in Sarawak, only a few studies on stress among teachers have been carried out. Abang Mat Ali (1998) conducted a study among secondary school teachers in Kuching-Samarahan schools and focused on the coping strategies to
overcome stress. Yong, (1998) only confined his study to particular urban schools in Sibu and focused on teachers stress level and students performance. In Miri, a study on the level of stress and stress factors among trained teachers were carried out on three secondary schools (Wong, 1999). Previous studies (Abang Mat Ali, 1998; Yong, 1998; Wong, 1999) in Sarawak tended to emphasize generally on teachers as a whole and not specifically towards beginner teachers. It is apparent that stress is not experienced uniformly by teachers, but varies from one individual to another (Albertson & Kagan, 1987; Dworkin, Haney, Dworkin & Telschow, 1990).

Stress is a problem that is not only experienced in the early career stage of preparation, but must be addressed at this point for both current and future needs if these individuals are going to be successful or even remain in the profession. Occupational stress is therefore considered critical in the teaching profession as it affects the health and reduces work performance and effectiveness. Some of the stress related health problems reported include coronary artery disease, alcoholism, fatigue, headaches, insomnia and nervous tension (Kyriacou & Pratt, 1985). A special report in the ‘Pendidikan’ section (Utusan Malaysia 27-28 February 1998) reviewed on the chronic problems that were faced by teachers in Malaysia. It was reported that about 600 teachers were experiencing serious psychological and mental problems. Many of the personal and professional problems that were not being able to handle by teachers were reflected in their reporting feelings of irritability, fatigue, frustration and anger. When these symptoms were not dealt with, teachers experience greater stress that often leads to increasing levels of burnout and eventually dropout (Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982; Gold, 1985).

Therefore, the most dangerous threats to the physical, emotional and intellectual welfare of teachers are the stressful and emotional dilemmas they encounter almost daily. Through informal conversation and observation by the researcher prior to the study, beginner teachers often remarked that they were under stress. Signs of stress were also shown, as there were complaints about their work and feelings of dissatisfaction with the teaching profession. They also had problems with classroom discipline and keeping up with deadlines. Expectations from school’s administrators were assumed to be too high, relationships with colleagues were getting worse and feeling of depersonalization within themselves. They also lamented that they were disappointed with the income and felt emotionally exhausted. Such physiological and psychological reactions can decrease a person’s satisfaction, creativity, and productivity, and these effects in turn often increase a person’s level of stress, thus causing further decrease in effectiveness. Hence, the researcher hopes to further identify the stress level of beginner teachers, describe their nature of occupational stress and the relationship with job satisfaction.

1.3 Purpose of study

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To investigate the level of occupational stress among the selected beginner teachers.
2. To investigate the level of job satisfaction among the selected beginner teachers.
3. To determine differences in occupational stress level among the various demographic characteristics of the selected beginner teachers.
4. To rank the occupational stress domains experienced by the selected beginner teachers.
5. To rank the job satisfaction factors experienced by the selected beginner teachers.
6. To investigate the relationships between occupational stress and job satisfaction among the selected beginners teachers in secondary schools in Kuching-Samarahan Division, Sarawak.

1.4 Conceptual Framework of the study

As intended, the researcher will identify the stress level experienced by the beginner teachers. Demographic differences such as gender, age, marital status, category, years of teaching experience and location of school are compared to their occupational stress and job satisfaction. Further, the domains of stress were ranked and the relationships with the beginner teacher job satisfaction were also compared. A diagrammatic framework on the variables of the study is shown in figure 1.1

Figure 1.1: A diagrammatic framework of the study.

Independent Variables

Beginner Teacher
- Gender
- Age
- Location
- Marital status
- Category
- Years of teaching experience

Occupational Stress
- External (to school) domain
- Student domain
- Time demands
- School domain
- Personal domain

Job Satisfaction
- Supervision
- Income
- School culture
- Colleague relationship

Three main variables were used in this research. Two are the dependent variables, which are the stress domains and the job satisfaction factors and the demographic differences as the independent variable. The main stressors as grouped into the domains of stress are external to
school domain, student domain, time demands, school domain and personal domain. The job satisfaction factors include the school culture, supervision, income and colleague relationships. Several demographic characteristics were also identified such as gender, marital status, category, years of experience and location of school.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses are as follows:
1. There is no significant difference in occupational stress between male and female beginner teachers.
2. There is no significant difference in occupational stress between single and married beginner teachers.
3. There is no significant difference in occupational stress between trained and untrained beginner teachers.
4. There is no significant difference in occupational stress between beginner teachers in urban and rural schools.
5. There is no significant difference in the occupational stress among the three categories of teaching experience.
6. There is no significant relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction among beginner teachers.

1.6 Significance of the study

Teachers are the most important assets in schools and it is important for them to have the competencies in carrying out their job effectively. By identifying the causes of stress in the school collaboratively and working as a team will ensure the vision and mission of the school to be achieved. Stress is an ongoing loss of resource especially reduced productivity, absenteeism, worker turnover and impaired employee health (McCormick, 1997). Individual who could not withstand new stressors will be increasingly vulnerable to further burnout and other stress-related difficulties. Information and data collected concerning job satisfaction among beginner teachers is also important as it may have a negative impact on teachers mental and physical state. Thus, this situation will worsen their job performance in the educational organisation. Findings from the study may provide some positive feedback to the Education Ministry to improve the teaching profession. Remedial action or preventive measures can be implemented to help teachers cope with the stress domains that they are facing.

Besides, it is also necessary to create the innovative and conducive environment for the future generation. Students usually learn from where they were taught and brought up. Therefore, in every individual there seems to be a great influence of schooling life. This study will also inspire beginner teachers in the schools to learn and be aware of their occupational stress domains. Further preventive measures taken that enable them to cope with occupational stress effectively will increase their job satisfaction and enhance performance to produce better students.

This study should be useful for other schools that are facing the similar problems among beginner teachers and assisting every school to have a shift in towards excellence. In pursue for solutions, it is also hoped that the stress domains identified and recommendations
suggested in this research will come in handy for schools that are facing their transforming process or overcoming the implications of change and its effect on the beginner teachers.

1.7 Limitation of the study

Stress problems in schools are initially observed by the researcher. The core problem may not be so for some other environment. Therefore, it is only a ‘real problem’ as a site-base environment and must not be applied exactly in any other environment that might differ. The level of stress experienced by beginners teachers may differ from the level of stress faced by experienced teachers. It can only be posed as a framework of methods of study taken to identify and rank the occupational stress of beginner teachers.

The findings from this study are limited to the population in the area of study. Selection of schools and samples are randomly done depending on the location in the Kuching-Samarahan Division. Only 200 beginner teachers (20 schools) from a total of 440 beginner teachers (50 schools) in the Kuching Samarahan Division were required to answer the questionnaire. Therefore, the findings of this study should not be generalized to the population of beginner teachers throughout Sarawak or Malaysia as working environments may also differ from one school to another.

Collections of data in this study are also limited to the information gathered from the questionnaire answered by the respondent of beginner teachers. Therefore, the information given was limited to the questionnaire that may not be absolutely true. As there were time constrains, triangulation methods were not carrying out in the research.

1.8 Definition of terms

For the purpose of this study, the following operational definitions are used.

1.8.1 Beginner teacher
Beginner teacher refers to teachers in their first three years of teaching in secondary schools after having received a degree. This includes temporary university graduate teachers that are serving in secondary schools for three years and below.

1.8.2 Rural schools
Rural schools are schools in the Kuching-Samarahan Division and beyond the circumference of 25 kilometers from the city center of Kuching as defined by the State Education Department.

1.8.3 Urban schools
Urban schools are schools in the Kuching-Samarahan Division and within the circumference of 25 kilometers from the city center of Kuching as defined by the State Education Department.

1.8.4 Division
In Sarawak, there are nine divisions where Kuching and Samarahan are two different divisions. Division in this study refers to the Education Division of Sarawak where Kuching and Samarahan Division are being combined into one Division and under one Divisional Education Officer.
1.8.5 **Occupational stress**

Occupational stress is a situation wherein job-related factors interact with a beginner teacher to change (i.e. disrupt or enhance) his or her psychological and or physiological condition such that the teacher (i.e. mind and body) is forced to deviate from normal functioning (Beehr and Newman, 1978). This definition includes the unpleasant emotion experience by the beginner teachers such as tension, frustration, anxiety, anger and depression resulting from aspects of his work as a teacher (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978). While acknowledging that stress may be a positive experience (eustress) by Selye (1956), the occupational stress of teachers has generally been viewed as negative (Kyriacou & Pratt, 1985; Dworkin, et al. 1990; Tuetteman & Punch, 1992). In this study, occupational stress meant the adaptation to negative environmental factors or stressors associated with teaching.

1.8.6 **Stressors**

A stressor is a demand either physical or psychological in nature encountered during the course of living (Greenberg, 1996). In this study, it is related to situations or events that may in principle arouse a stress response among beginner teachers. 'Teachers’ Attribution of Responsibility for Stress Questionnaires’ (TARSQ) is a set of 30 items that represent five domains to which teachers attribute responsibility for their occupational stress are measured as stressors (McCormick and Solman, 1992). Many of the TARSQ items are readily identified with stressors reported in other studies (Laughlin, 1984; Payne & Furnham, 1987; Borg & Riding, 1993; McCormick, 1997; Ho, 2000). The domains of occupational stress were namely: external (to school) domain, student domain, time demands, school domain and personal domain.

1.8.7 **Job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is defined as affective orientation on the part of individuals toward work roles which they presently occupying (Vroom, 1964). He suggested seven factors of job satisfaction might exist: attitudes toward the company and company management, attitudes toward promotion opportunities, attitudes toward job content, attitudes toward supervision, attitudes toward financial rewards, attitudes toward working conditions, and attitudes toward co-workers. In a more critical review, Smith, Kendall and Hulin (1969) concluded that the factors that seem to emerge most consistently are a general factor, a pay and material-rewards factor, a factor dealing with work itself, a supervision factor, and a factor related to the other workers on the job. However, in this study, only four areas of satisfaction will be investigated: school culture, supervision, income, and colleague relationships.

1.9 **Summary**

Occupational stress and job satisfaction among beginners teachers are briefly discussed in this chapter. The background and the problem of the study are being identified. Furthermore, some hypotheses were built to verify the study and the importance of studying beginner teachers’ stress and job satisfaction. The aim of the study, the operational definitions, significance of the study and its’ limitations were also explained to help readers to have a better understanding of the research. In the following chapter, the literature review of this study will be discussed.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter will review several important literatures that will enable a better understanding for this research. The importance of organisational behavior was essential to look into the context of the school as an organisation. Definitions, concepts, theories and models of stress were examined. Job satisfaction theories were also discussed and finally a framework of the study was designed.

2.1 Organisational behavior

In order to understand the teachers’ stress problems and their job satisfaction, particularly as an individual or group behavior, we should define several views on organisational behavior. According to Schermerhorn, Templer, Cattaneo, Hunt, & Osborn (1992), organisational behavior is the study of individuals and group in organisations. It is a body of knowledge with special implications for the effective management of people as the human resources of organisations.

Within a school as an organisation, certain behaviors and demands are associated with the role fulfilled. Teachers in schools play different roles in carrying out their responsibility that are sometimes contrasting and complementary. Therefore, dysfunction may occur at two different levels (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964) and be a major source of teacher stress, that was, role conflict (conflicting job demands) and role ambiguity (lack of clarity about the task). Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman (1970) suggested that role conflict and role ambiguity were related to job dissatisfaction and inappropriate organisational behavior. Thus, organisational behavior in the school’s environment should be understood as a systematically and scientifically analysis on the behavior of the individual teacher, group of teachers and all the teachers in the school as an organisation to achieve its’ effective management.

2.2 Definition of stress

The word stress means so many different things to so many different people that it has been described as the most imprecise definition in the scientific dictionary. There are literally hundreds of definitions for stress to be found in the research and professional literature. Virtually, all of them can be placed into one of these three categories: stress can be defined as a stimulus, a response or an interaction. In defining stress among social scientist, Hooke’s late seventeenth-century engineering principles were used as an analogue. The external force was called load; stress was the ratio of the pressure on the object created by the load to the size of the area affected; and strain was the deformation of the object. A medical variant, drawn from Claude Bernard’s concept of homeostasis and reflected in the work of Cannon (1939) and Selye (1956), views stress as the deformation or strain itself – that is, the physiological disturbance in response to load. Here, Selye used the term stress to mean what Hooke had called strain, and stressor for the noxious agents in the environment.

Selye’s classic work on stress is considered as a useful reference point. He coined words to describe different types of stress by calling positive stress as ‘eustress’ and negative stress as
‘distress’. Seyle’s stress model (1956) is divided into four stages: (1) stressors, in Seyle’s approach a wide variety of events and conditions that represented threat or insult to the organism; (2) conditioning factors that alter the impact of the stressor on the organism, as in coping resources in the psychosocial model; (3) the general adaptation syndrome (GAS), an intervening state of stress in the organism; and (4) responses, adaptive, or maladaptive. His definition of stress is the non-specific (that is common) result of any demand upon the body, be the effect mental or somatic.

Stress is also referring to a psychological and physiological state that results when certain features of an individual’s environment, including noise, pressures, job promotions, monotony, or the general climate, attack or impinge on that person; these features create an actual or perceived imbalance between demand and capability to adjust and result in a non-specific response (Mikhail, 1981). According to Spielberger (1979) the term stress is used to refer a complex psychobiological process that consists of three major elements. The process in initiated by a situation or stimulus that is potentially harmful or dangerous (stressors). If a stressor is interpreted as dangerous or threatening, an anxiety reaction will be elicited. Thus the definition of stress refers to the following temporal events:

\[
\text{Stressor} \rightarrow \text{Perception of threat} \rightarrow \text{Anxiety state}
\]

Stress is a non-specifically induced psychological state of an individual that develops because the individual is faced with situations that “tax or exceed available resources (internal or external), as appraised by the person involved” (Lazarus, 1980). It is a dynamic condition in which the person is confronted with (1) an opportunity, (2) a constraint, or (3) a demand for which resolution is both uncertain and important (Schuler, 1980). Matteson & Ivancevich (1987) defined stress as an adaptive response, moderated by individual differences, that is a consequence of any action, situation, or event that places special demands upon a person.

In the context of stress among beginner teachers in this study, Kyriacou (1989) definition of stress as “the experience by teacher of unpleasant emotions such as anger, tension, frustration, anxiety, depression and nervousness, resulting from aspects of their work as teachers” was deemed most appropriate. Stress was considered as an unpleasant emotional state and adaptation to negative environmental factors or stressors associated with teaching.

2.3 Occupational stress concept

Occupational stress was considered to be one of the leading work-related health problems (Nhundu, 1999). Lazarus (1993) described occupational stress as a unidimensional concept and claimed that until the 1960s, stress had been largely defined as destructive environmental demands, a viewpoint consistent with an epistemology that once dominated academic thought. It must be understood closely to what that can be observed directly in the environmental stimulus and in the behavioral and organismic response.

Another view of occupational stress that was contrast to the concept of stress was considered as overload (Mandler, 1982; Burke, 1996). Though no longer new, this more recent, cognitive view of stress focuses in interruption and subsumes the idea of overload. The basic premise of interruption theory is the well-documented finding that automatic activity (distress or anxiety)
results whenever some organized action or thought process is interrupted. Interruption is the
disconfirmation of expectancy or the non-completion of some initiated action. The automatic
activity instigated by interruption (stress) serves as a signaling system that demands attention.

Miller (1965) as cited in Cummings and Cooper (1979) provided a number of precise
concepts that may help to reduce ambiguity of the term stress and his conception of stress
may be summarized as follows:

1. Based on genetic makeup, experience, and reinforcements, an organism
develops a preferential hierarchy of values. This determines the individual’s
preference for one steady state rather than another, and hence, the range of
stability for each of the variables the organism attempts to maintain in balance.

2. A stress or threat creates a strain within the individual when it pushes a steady
state variable beyond its range of stability.

3. The organism experiences this strain through a negative feedback process where
the actual state of the variable is compared to its preferred state. A discrepancy
between the actual and the preferred informs the individual of the need to cope
with stress.

4. Depending upon the probability of error, lag, and gain of the feedback, the
individual may synthesize and enact effective adjustment processes. This
feedback-adjustment cycle continues until the organism reduces the strain, or
alters its preferred steady state, or perishes from inability to cope with the stress
or threat situation.

2.4 Theories of stress

A theory is a generalization that specifies relationships between factors; it is an attempt to
make sense out of empirical observations that do not contain any inherent and obvious logic
(Miner, 1992). Theories of stress may be partitioned into three types: response oriented
theories, stimulus oriented theories, and interactive or organism oriented theories (Lazarus,
1966).

2.4.1 Response oriented theory - Stress as the dependent variable

In this approach, stress is associated in the form of response-based meaning. It is described in
terms of the individual’s response to some threatening or disturbing stimuli (as a dependent
variable). Generally, there are three levels of responses: psychological, physiological and
behavioral that interacts with one another.

The psychological response to the stressors by exhibiting the consequences or symptoms of
emotional reactions such as feelings of exhaustion, depression, anger, frustration, anxiety,
moodiness, and lack of self confidence. A stressed individual may also react physiologically
by the increase in heart rate and blood pressure that will affect the sympathetic nervous
system and the endocrine glands. One may also show its behavioral effects in the form of
actions like absenteeism, being hot tempered, hostile speech and behavior, authoritative and
low attention to students. Each of these responses is interrelated and interacts with one
another. Figure 2.1 explains diagrammatically this response-oriented theory of stress.
This response-oriented theory originated from the field of medicine and an individual can be said to be experiencing stressful situations when consequences of stress are being identified. A study on response-oriented theory of stress was carried out by Selye in 1936 and introduced the notion of stress-related illness in terms of the general adaptation syndrome (GAS). Kahn and Byosiere (1992) concluded in a literature review that stress has been mainly regarded as a dependent variable resulting from stressors—a variety of stimuli evoking negative psychological or physiological reactions. Figure 2.2 describes the three stages of response within GAS and further suggested that stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it (Selye, 1956).

Figure 2.2 General adaptation syndrome.

Key:

1. Shock;
2. Counter-shocks;
3. Resistance;
2.4.2 Stimulus oriented theory - Stress as the independent variable

Stress is associated in the form of stimulus-based meaning and a potential stressor is treated as the independent variable in the external environment. The rationale of this approach is that it impinges upon the individual in a disruptive way, and brings about changes in the individual. The stress level is dependent upon the individual and the duration and severity of the pressure exerted. Figure 2.3 represents the stimulus-oriented theory of stress.

Figure 2.3: Stimulus oriented theory - Stress as the independent variable

*S – stimulus  *R – response

Stress is seen as stimulus (S) from the external environment that causes strain in the person as the individual response (R) to it. The individual will try to cope with the stress conditions within his/her tolerance levels. However, if these conditions exceed the tolerance level, temporary or permanent damage may occur. Lazarus (1966) argued that no objective criterion is good enough to describe a situation as stressful and only the person coping with it will understand the intensity of the stress experienced.

According to Sutherland and Cooper (1993), an individual is perpetually bombarded with potential stressors sources in the environment but just one more apparently minor or innocuous event can alter the delicate balance between coping and the total breakdown of coping behavior. The theory originated from the fields of engineering and physics and stress can be defined as a force exerted, which results in a demand or load reaction that causes distortion.
2.4.3 An interactive or organism oriented theory

An interactive or organism oriented theory of stress incorporates both the response-oriented and stimulus-oriented theory. This theory emphasized that the individual is both an influence and response to its environment. It is also known as a transactional model.

An individual mediates the environmental impact and at the same time the perceptual, cognitive and physiological characteristics of the individual is being affected and becomes a significant component of the environment. With the potential source of stress from the environment, the individual will response to cope in order to overcome the problem. However, incapability of coping successfully causes imbalance and symptoms of stress physiologically, psychologically and behavioral. This perspective has been used widely in the biological, physical and social sciences to explain how systems adjust or adapt their reactions to cope with disturbances from goal achievement. Figure 2.4 described diagrammatically the interaction between the individual with the environment and the responses.

Figure 2.4: An interactive or organism oriented theory