
Pestonjee, D.M. **STRESS AND COPING: THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE**, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 240.

Management of stress is a field that has been attracting interest of people from various disciplines since a very long time. Medical scientists interest is well known in terms of studies on impact of stress on coronary heart disease and psychosomatic disorders; social scientists' interest is reflected in their attempts to define, measure and identify ways to manage stress. Managers' interest is in the direction of internalising the research findings from these disciplines in order to learn new ways to cope with stress. Lastly, organisations are interested in this field for they believe that employee stress can have detrimental effect on productivity.

One finds in the market, umpteen number of books on stress management but most of them originate from the West and fall in the category of 'easy fix' techniques which often sprout from 'armchair thinking'. The book under review is an exception in the following respects:

- a) it is from India, presenting both the Western and Indian perspectives on stress;
- b) it comprehensively deals with findings from Indian researchers whose studies are carried out on Indian managerial samples, hence making it more relevant for our managers; and
- c) it presents various antecedents, moderators and consequences of stress.

The author has successfully attempted to organise the vast material into three meaningful parts:

- a) The Stress Process
- b) Stress and Organisation, and
- c) Management of Stress

The first part contains three chapters. Despite its existence in literature since mid-thirties, stress has varying meanings to researchers. In the first chapter, in addition to presenting various meanings of and approaches to stress, Pestonjee provided the rationale for the variations in the approaches. The role of physiology in understanding stress is crucial for it is considered both as the cause and the effect of stress. The second chapter deals with further establishing the link between stress and physiology. Social scientists have been emphasising the role of life events in explaining stress. The last chapter in this section provides a detailed account of work carried out both by Western and Indian researchers on the role of life events.

This chapter which deals with psychometric properties of various instruments that measure life events, is of particular interest to students in the field of psychological measurement. An interesting aspect of this chapter is the relationship between life events and psychosis, hysteria and cancer.

Most of the research work in the area of stress has been carried out in the context of organisations. This is primarily because of its applicative value and the unquenchable thirst of managers and organisations in understanding stress. The second section of the book is mainly in this direction. Under the title of 'Organisational Role Stress', the first chapter of this section deals with various dimensions of role stress in organisations, as identified by various researchers. This chapter extensively deals with various correlates of roles stress: anger, speed and impatience, motivation, job involvement, ego strength, lack of control, age, leadership style, productivity, satisfaction, organisational effectiveness, organisational climate, etc.

The other chapter in this section attempts to explain role stress in special groups. Presenting a meaningful argument that the nature of organisational and nature of job have a significant place in determining role stress, the author lucidly presents several studies carried out. Some of the interesting findings are:

- 1) employees of public sector organisations experience more stress than their counterparts in private organisations;
- 2) among bank employees, job level has differing influence on stress; coping styles varies across banks;
- 3) managers of private computer organisations score high on stress than their counterparts in public organisations;
- 4) doctors experience maximum inter-role distance while it is minimum among gazetted officers, researchers, college and university teachers;
- 5) married women experience more role stress than unmarried women; and
- 6) among police personnel, crime and railway and security personnel experience more stress than others.

This section is of significant value primarily for the doctoral students who intend pursuing research in the field of stress.

The last section on management of stress is a crucial one for it interests both the academic researcher and the practising manager. The first chapter

of the section deals with the coping styles or strategies adopted to deal with the stress experienced. Surprisingly, this area seems yet to be fully explored as evidenced by the small volume of research investigations. An interesting finding is that there are several factors that influence the choice of a particular coping style.

The relationship of stress to various personal, organisational and situational variables are not linear, for some variables have moderating influence on this relationship. The next chapter of this section deals with this phenomenon extensively. Some of the variables that are found to be moderators of stress are: need for achievement, need for self-actualisation, need for personal growth, locus of control, type A pattern of behaviour, mental health, coping strategies, effort and outcome orientation, organisational climate and job satisfaction.

The last chapter of this section as well as the book deals with counteracting stress. In this chapter, the author presented several approaches like job characteristics, stress audit, role efficacy, and action plan. Under action plan, the role of yoga to counter stress is vividly explained.

Despite its comprehensive presentation of research findings of studies carried out by various Indian scientists on personnel of different organisations, the book disappoints the practising manager who often looks for suggestions emerging from these findings. Similarly, organisations concerned with ways to help its employees to reduce stress and identify effective ways to manage stress in ever changing organisational world would do not derive much benefit. This is primarily because very little attempt is made in terms of implications and suggestions from the various investigations. Nevertheless, this book is certainly of value, particularly to research students in the area of stress management for it panoramically deals with empirical and theoretical attempts made in India.

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