

Stress Management: A Historical and Theoretical Perspective

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Abstract:- Purpose: The paper reviews diverse stress theories, considering the historical background and theoretical framework of various disciplines ranging from physiological, psychological, life events, cognitive, sociological, and occupational perspectives. The study goal is to examine the numerous viewpoints of different researchers to understand the intricacy of stress and highlight its impact in the workplace.

Methodology: The research considers the chronological methods of locating and reviewing old and current literature on stress theories, beginning with late 19th-century theories such as Walter Cannon's Fight or Flight Theory (1932) and Hans Selye's theory (1936) and then moving on to the current stress theories and analyses of the importance of stress management and the impact of stress on humanity.

Findings: This study analyzes the advancement of major stress theories and assists future researchers and organizations as a whole to develop stress management strategies that can enhance the well-being and job performance of employees taking into account their specific needs and challenges.

Objectives: aim to identify existing stress theories to investigate various concepts and viewpoints on stress, its meaning, and its consequences.

Limitations: This study does not involve any fieldwork, practical observation, a collection of data, or case studies but merely a literature analysis of related theories on stress.

Keywords: Stress, Stress Management, Stress Theories

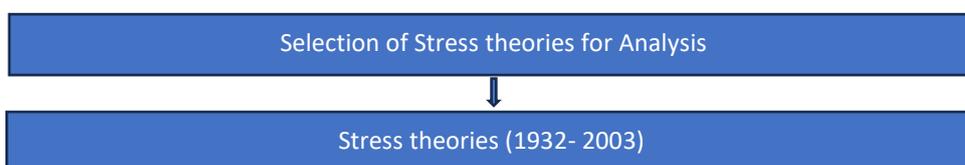
1. INTRODUCTION

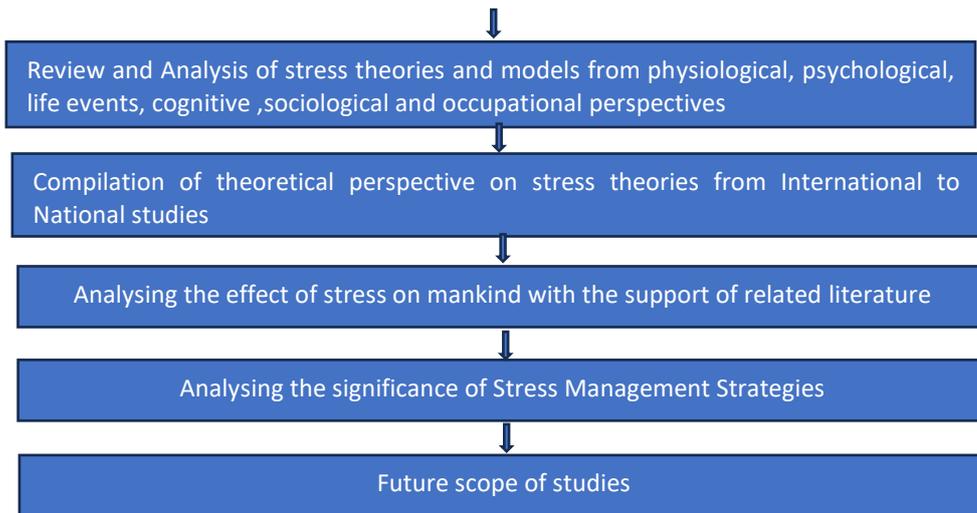
Stress has become an unavoidable aspect of life in our fast-paced, competitive, and incredibly demanding environment. To understand the intricate nature of

stress and its impact on people, stress management strategies are crucial. Stress management is the process of improving in response to stressful events in life and developing resilience by utilizing a variety of coping mechanisms and tactics. By adopting the best stress management strategy, an individual can cope with stress, lower overall stress levels, and improve performance in an organization. If an individual is living under a lot of stress, their overall well-being is in jeopardy. Stress has a devastating effect on emotional stability and general physical and mental well-being. It limits an individual's capacity to appreciate life, think clearly, and work efficiently. Therefore, researching and reviewing the idea of stress proposed and implemented by various researchers and knowing its significance and its effect on individual health has resulted in a comprehensive analysis of the various stress theories from different fields worldwide.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study methodology involves a chronological way of finding and reviewing existing stress theories with proper analysis of the related stress theories and models from the late 19th century that have contributed to the study of stress from how individuals respond to stressful situations and how stress management is necessary to implement in an organization for better performance. This helps to understand the consequences of stress on humans and to develop an effective management strategy to overcome stress. Reviewing various related literature helps to understand the different viewpoints and ideas of various renowned researchers in medical science as well as in psychology.





III. REVIEW & FINDINGS

3.1 Walter Cannon Fight or Flight Theory (1932)

Walter Cannon was the first to contribute to the study of stress in 1932. He used the term "fight-or-flight" to describe the physiological responses that occur when an organism senses danger; the body is quickly stimulated and motivated through the sympathetic nervous system and the endocrine system. The organism is mobilized to combat a threat or to escape by the physiological response. This is why it's known as the fight-or-flight reaction. Fight is an aggressive response to stress, such as getting angry and acting out, whereas flight response means escaping the problem by ignoring it or engaging in some other activities. The primary tenet of Cannon's theory of emotions is that although humans respond to emotional stimuli, the subjective experience of emotion and the body's physiological reaction is controlled by two distinct brain regions: the thalamus, the area of the brain primarily involved in physiological emotion, and the cortex, which is responsible for controlling and suppressing it. Investigating how cultural and environmental factors influence stress responses and

homeostasis could be another area for future research. Understanding these influences could help tailor stress management strategies to diverse populations.

3.2 Hans Selye Theory- 1936

Hans Selye, a well-known endocrinologist, took the word "stress" from an existing engineering and physics term. He was the first one to introduce the concept of stress in life science. He began his stress research while he was a medical student in 1936. His views shaped the scientific study and real-world stress management strategies by laying the groundwork for knowledge of stress as a complex interaction of biological, psychological, and environmental components. Hans Selye, known as the "father of stress," conducted groundbreaking research on the physiological effects of stress in 1926, observing that patients with various illnesses displayed similar non-specific symptoms in response to stressors. He identified a recurring three-stage pattern of physiological reactions to stress, which he called the general adaptation syndrome (GAS) before changing its name to the stress response. The three stages are:

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) Model		
1 st Stage -Alarm Reaction Stage	2 nd Stage- Resistance or Adaptation Stage	3 rd Stage- Exhaustion Stage
The fight-or-flight reaction is triggered as the body gets ready to face the stressor.	to deal with recurring difficulties, the body adjusts to the stressor by sustaining elevated physiological reactions.	extended stress causes resources to be depleted, which lowers resistance and may result in health problems.
Activation of sympathetic Nervous System	activation of Parasympathic nervous system	prolonged stress that is not resolved leads to this last stage
Adreline, cortisol, and other stress chemicals are released suddenly.	the effect of stress turns to normal as the body begin to repair itself	can deplete a person's mental, emotional, and physical health.

Increase in heartbeat, breathing rate, blood pressure etc	if stress persist the body will continue to secrete stress hormones and symptoms like irritability, sleeplessness, frustration, lack of concentration	it leads to various health issue as the body cannot fight with stress like diabetes, high blood pressure etc.
The body gives either "Fight or Flight" response		mental health disorder such as Depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts

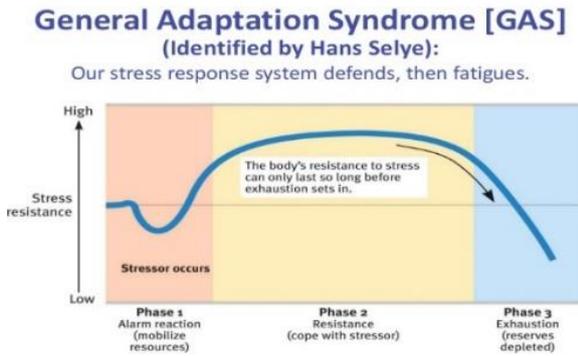


Figure 1: Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) Model

3.3 Holmes and Rahe's Life Events Theory (1967)

The theory proposed by Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe in 1967 on life events to examine the connection between stressful life events and health outcomes. After examining more than 5,000 medical records, the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) was developed to evaluate how different life events lead to stress and ensuing illness. 43 distinct life experiences are given Life Change Units (LCUs) by the scale, which weighs each event based on how stressful it is thought to be. Marriage, for instance, has a score of 50 LCUs, indicating that it significantly affects stress levels. Higher SRRS scores are associated with an increased risk of illness. The way that stress is perceived and handled is influenced by personal coping mechanisms. The scale was validated with both men and women. Life's events mirror the conditions and values of a past generation. This theory provides a framework for stress research but is not free from limitations, the absence of thorough measures for stressors encountered in daily life as the SRRS might not fairly represent the stressors of everyday living, and limited knowledge of the differences in coping styles among individuals as people's reactions to stress differ greatly. However, the concept ignores the fact that various persons may have diverse interpretations and have different reactions to the same events. For example, although some people may see a family gathering as an opportunity to relax, others may find it

stressful. Assuming that everyone is equally impacted by life experiences ignores individual differences.

3.4 Lazarus and Folkman’s Psychological Stress and Coping Theory (1984)

Richard Lazarus was a prominent psychologist known for his work on stress and coping. The study highlighted the cognitive assessment process that people go through when they are in stressful situations. This model is widely utilized in a variety of domains, such as clinical and health psychology and workplace stress management, to assist employees in managing stress and to support chronic illness. The first component of this theory is the primary appraisal. Here the stressors are analyzed as to whether it’s a threat or challenge. If the stressor is a threat, it may cause harm, fear, worry, disappointment, or unfavorable outcomes. If the stressor is a challenge, an individual may believe that there is a chance for growth and development. The second appraisal follows, in which the person assesses their resources, skills, abilities, and available support to determine how well they can cope. After the primary and secondary appraisals come the coping techniques. Individuals use coping strategies to deal with stress; Lazarus categorizes coping strategies into two types, viz. Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping techniques concentrate on directly addressing the source and underlying cause of stress, such as problem-solving or seeking information and support, whereas emotion-focused coping techniques try to control emotional reactions associated with stress, such as looking for social support and engaging in leisure and relaxation activities. Then come the outcomes: inadequate coping can result in more negative outcomes and greater stress, while successful coping can lower stress levels and promote well-being. According to this theory, if a person's stress level rises even after an assessment, they might use a different technique called reappraisal, in which they re-evaluate or use more resources to deal with the circumstances. Future studies must concentrate on gaining a more sophisticated

knowledge of the various coping taxonomies and their shortcomings as well as evaluate the dynamic coping process and examine the connections between environmental factors and future-oriented coping in predicting health and work-related outcomes and finding alternate coping mechanisms. It is utilized in a variety of domains, such as clinical and health psychology and workplace stress management, to assist employees in managing stress and to support chronic illness. The first component of this theory is the primary appraisal. Here the stressors are analyzed as to whether it's a threat or challenge. If the stressor is a threat, it may cause harm, fear, worry, disappointment, or unfavorable outcomes. If the stressor is a challenge, an individual may believe that there is a chance for growth and development. The second appraisal follows, in which the person assesses their resources, skills, abilities, and available support to determine how well they can cope. After the primary and secondary appraisals come the coping techniques. Individuals use coping strategies to deal with stress; Lazarus categorizes coping strategies into two types, viz. Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping techniques concentrate on directly addressing the source and underlying cause of stress, such as problem-solving or seeking information and support, whereas emotion-focused coping techniques try to control emotional reactions associated with stress, such as looking for social support and engaging in leisure and relaxation activities. Then come the outcomes: inadequate coping can result in more negative outcomes and greater stress, while successful coping can lower stress levels and promote well-being. According to this theory, if a person's stress level rises even after an assessment, they might use a different technique called reappraisal, in which they re-evaluate or use more resources to deal with the circumstances. Future studies must concentrate on gaining a more sophisticated knowledge of the various coping taxonomies and their shortcomings as well as evaluate the dynamic coping process and examine the connections between environmental factors and future-oriented coping in predicting health and work-related outcomes and finding alternate coping mechanisms.

3.5 Cox's Theory of Stress (1985)

Cox's theory examines the physiological and psychological effects of stress that are part of a broader discussion on stress. This model highlights how crucial personal perception is to the stress response.

According to Cox, stress occurs when an individual's capacity to handle challenges and demands imposed upon them diverges. This theory highlights that a stressful situation arises when a person's resources, time, energy, and social support are insufficient to meet the demands they encounter, which makes them feel more stressed. This issue happens particularly in an organization where there is increasing competition and layoffs that can make workers feel more stressed. This theory emphasizes that coping strategies play a crucial part in managing stress, especially in the workplace. By comprehending and developing stress management strategies into practice, people can better handle the pressure and demands at their workplace.

3.6 Warr's Vitamin Model of Stress (1987)

Warr's Vitamin Model (VM) is a theoretical framework that provides a distinctive viewpoint on how employment qualities can impact employee well-being, similar to how vitamins affect health. According to the Vitamin Model, job characteristics such as safety, good pay, proper role and designation, freedom at work, regular feedback, support, and appreciation are required to support the employee's mental health in the workplace, much like vitamins, where a certain quantity is required for health but too much can be hazardous and a high level of job autonomy may be harmful. The study emphasizes the value of social support at work and the significance of comprehending how various job characteristics might impact workers' well-being and its necessity for organizations to establish settings that promote favorable mental health outcomes.

3.7 Karasek's Demand and Control Theory (1979)

This model was developed for work environments where stress is chronic and intended to forecast adverse consequences of stress. Karasek focussed on two perspectives based on occupational stress high job demands or workload and low control. This model laid a foundation for having a comprehensive understanding of work-related stress enhancing employees' job satisfaction and providing them with opportunities to learn new skills and take on challenging tasks. According to this theory, high job strains lead to illness, depression, exhaustion, and prolonged health issues and people are more likely to leave their jobs when there is less support from management whereas "active jobs"—those that provide a lot of decision-making authority can

encourage learning and motivation. The study emphasizes that many stress-related issues stem from the way employment is structured in the modern global economy. It argues that rather than only treating the symptoms of stress, effective strategies must be implemented to address its root cause. The theory suggests that addressing the psychological aspects of work, implementing employee-centered organizational policies, and fostering a healthy work environment can all improve productivity and health.

3.8 Carol S. Aneshensel on Social Stress Theory (1992)

Social Stress Theory is a sociological framework that focuses on how social factors contribute to the experience of stress and its impact on individual well-being. This theory highlights the systemic character of stress and its effects on psychological well-being by focusing on the interaction between social organization and personal stress experiences. Addressing stress on an individual and societal level can be made easier by understanding these processes. The study of social stress theory examines how social structures and organizations affect people's stress levels. This theory holds that stress is not solely the result of individual circumstances or mental health problems but can also be brought on by the structure of society. According to this theory, societal systemic circumstances are the source of many stressors. For example, a businessman may inevitably suffer from problems like business bankruptcies and joblessness, which can cause stress. Stress is not merely an individual feeling but rather a deeply embedded societal system of inequalities, discrimination, prejudices, unemployment, relationships, and social structure. Social stress is shaped by a complex connection among institutional, social support, personal coping strategies, and economic conditions. Addressing the effects of stress on people and communities requires an understanding of these elements.

3.9 J. Siegrist Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (1996)

The effort-reward imbalance model was proposed by J. Siegrist in 1996 and identifies a connection between workplace stress and health issues. Stress at work increases the likelihood of health issues for susceptible workers. The high effort from employees but the low reward leads to stress and can cause depression and coronary heart disease in an individual. The effort-reward imbalance model was created to pinpoint the

negative health impacts of demanding psychosocial work environments. It happens when a lot of effort is put in at a job but little is rewarded. Siegrist's definition is based on Selye (1936); when dangers and difficulties disrupt a person's daily routines and compel them to act and deal with the situation, those situations are viewed as stressful. Therefore, if coping mechanisms are ineffective, difficult circumstances end up causing distress. As depicted in Fig. 2, the ERI model is composed of three elements: effort, reward, and over-commitment. Demands and tasks, such as a heavy workload, frequent interruptions, or time pressure, are examples of efforts, whereas occupational rewards include things like money, job stability, and career enhancement. Strains happen when commitment and efforts are not equal to rewards and might eventually have an impact on the health and well-being of a person. Overcommitted employees who expect high rewards may sometimes overdo their work and demand greater compensation, which can eventually lead to disappointment and exhaustion.

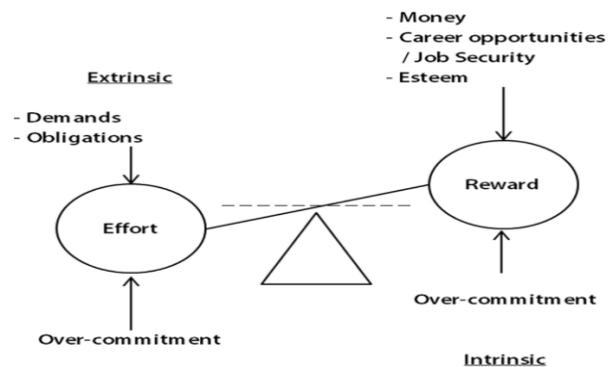


Fig 2: Effort-Reward Imbalance Model
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3.10 Holistic Model of Stress by Nelson and Simmons (2003)

Nelson and Simmons' holistic model of stress provides a thorough foundation for comprehending how people react to stress in both positive and negative ways. This theory states that people evaluate stress according to their own opinions. This implies that a person's interpretation of the same stressor can cause them to react differently. Whether a person experiences eustress (positive stress) or distress (negative stress) in response to the same demands can be greatly influenced by several factors, including personality, background, coping mechanisms, and prior experiences. This theory promotes a change in emphasis from not just managing distress to also cultivating eustress, which can improve more engagement at work and improve health and well-being.

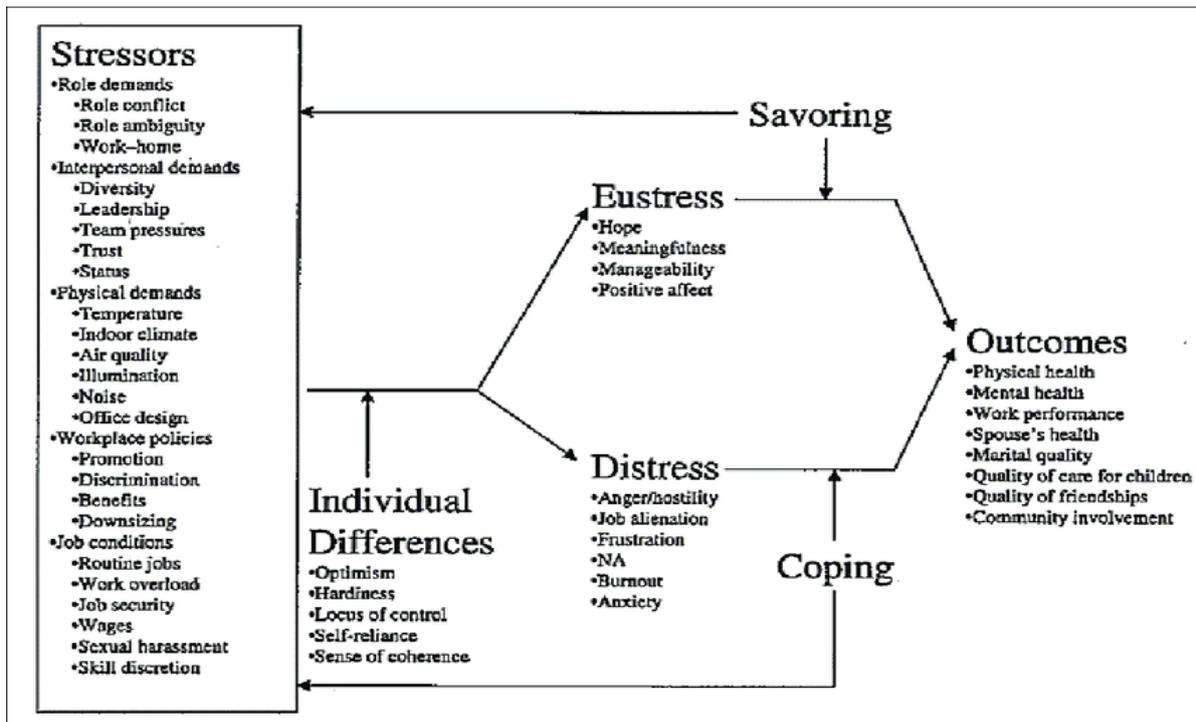


Fig 3: Nelson and Simmons Holistic Model of Stress

IV. EFFECT OF STRESS ON MANKIND

Habib Y et al., (2017), mentioned that chronic stress is harmful as it shrinks the brain size and structure and damages brain functions. When stress is low, it improves the memory power of the brain. He also stated that mild stress improves cognitive function in the brain. If it is prolonged stress, it can lead to cognitive disorders. It increases the bad bacteria in the stomach, makes the gastrointestinal tract inflamed, and affects the appetite, digestive system, and blood flow. This will raise awareness about diseases like ulcers in the intestines, constipation, and many others in the human body. Alan Rozanski et.al., (1999), studies provide evidence that acute and chronic stress can lead to cardiovascular disease and also affect females like ovarian dysfunction and pre-menopause issues. E. Ron de Kloet et.al., (2005), explains how the brain reacts after receiving a stressful event. When a person gets attacked or threatened by the environment, the hypothalamus in the brain sends the signal directly to the adrenaline glands and to the kidney and releases hormones called cortisol and adrenaline, which make the body react. When a person suffers from long-term stress, it increases the activity in the brain, increases the level of cortisol, and increases the neuron connections in the amygdala. The amygdala, which is located in the brain, helps humans process memory, make decisions, and respond to emotions or fear. Stress also affects the hippocampus, a part of the brain

that helps a person produce feelings and emotions, collect and retrieve information, and improve memory. When the hippocampus becomes weak, a person's ability to memorize things reduces, and their ability to control stress becomes low. A person will not be able to process thoughts or make proper decisions. High cortisol levels in the human body suppress the brain and increase blood pressure. It affects a person's ability to judge and interpret things. At a later stage, it can cause a mental problem. Alahmadi E., (2015), discovered that the consequences of stress on physical, emotional, and psychological disturbances are extensive. Numerous cardiovascular issues, including hypertension and an increased risk of heart disease, are linked to long-term stress. Studies of diabetes-related complications have shown that cardiovascular problems can result from dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system, namely increased sympathetic activity.

V. EFFECT OF STRESS ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Employee performance is negatively impacted by stress, which can also disrupt an employee's focus and mental state. Dr. Tulsee Giri Goswami (2015) stated that high absenteeism and turnover rates are indicators of employees who are under stress. If employees find it difficult to leave their positions, they may cause problems for management, including poor

performance, waste of operational resources, obstructing subordinates, and more. Dealing with stressful conditions at work has a detrimental effect on employees' physical and emotional well-being and thus affects the organization's overall performance. Daniel, C. O. (2019), in their study, shows that job stress and employee performance are significantly correlated. Excessive stress can cause fatigue and discontent, which can ultimately lower output and quality of work. The study also suggested that organizations should identify the factors that contribute to occupational stress and implement effective management strategies, such as employee assistance programs, to lower stress and enhance staff performance. Catherine A. V & Fonceca C.M. (2022), found that having a low quality of life resulted in low job performance. Bashir U & Ismail Ramay M (2010), in their study, show that there is a strong correlation between job stress and job performance. These two factors are adversely associated since it indicates that job performance tends to decline as job stress rises. The regression analysis found in the study indicates that for every one percent increase in job stress, there is a corresponding decrease of 52.7% in job performance. This substantial negative effect highlights the critical impact of stress on employees' ability to perform their jobs effectively.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE OF STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress management strategies or techniques are plans and tactics that include determining the cause of stress, substituting unhealthy behaviors with constructive ones, and selecting different coping mechanisms that allow an individual to fulfill organizational goals and lead a contented and successful life. Kaur R.P. & Sharma, P.G. (2016), the study emphasizes the necessity of putting stress management strategies into action to lessen stress and its negative effects. According to the authors, employees need a variety of training programs to function well in a demanding workplace. The findings show that companies with effective stress management strategies have a competitive edge. Employee productivity and effectiveness are often higher in organizations that use these kinds of initiatives, which can improve overall performance. Manjunatha, M. K. & Renukamurthy, T. P. (2017), stressors include things like role conflict, pressure at work, and the rapid growth of technology. It affects employee performance; thus, using the right stress management strategies is essential. Ben Hannigan et al. (2004) found out that the best coping strategies are to have a discussion or pleasant talk with

colleagues, invest some personal time in self-care, leisure activities, or hobbies, and take part in group activities. Robert L. Woolfolk and Paul M. (2021) stated that stress management is a combination of physical therapy and active intervention. It helps identify the root cause of stress. Social media, YouTube, videos, and blogs have a great influence on people's ability to overcome stress. Social support also helps with body relaxation and calmness. Ashok Panigrahi (2016) stated in his article that stress can be managed by investing time in personal development, learning new things, practicing self-control, prioritizing and breaking tasks into different parts, and delegating the work to others. Kaur & Sharma, P. G (2016), highlight the crucial need for stress management programs in an organization. These programs are critical for reducing stress and its harmful consequences, ultimately leading to a more productive workforce and a competitive advantage for businesses. The study suggested several coping strategies for employees to manage stress.

1. Encouragement and Appreciation: Recognising and applauding employees' efforts can considerably improve morale and reduce stress. This positive reinforcement contributes to a helpful work atmosphere.
2. Job Rotation and Enrichment: Implementing job rotation and enrichment strategies may help to reduce boredom and boost job satisfaction. These strategies allow employees to participate in a variety of jobs, which can reduce the stress associated with repetitive work.
3. Establishing an effective communication plan can assist overcome doubts and anxieties. Open communication may create trust and minimize stress among colleagues.
4. Work-Life Balance: Implementing a five-day work week and providing flexible leave options will provide employees more time for personal responsibilities and relaxation, lowering stress.
5. Relaxation Techniques: Encouraging techniques like meditation and yoga can assist employees in managing stress on an individual basis. These strategies encourage relaxation and mental clarity, which can be useful in high-pressure environments like banking.
6. Psychological Support: Counselling and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) can assist employees

deal with stress. Access to professional assistance might be critical in managing mental health difficulties.

7. Quality consciousness awareness programs: Organising programs to develop quality consciousness can help employees focus on their work and decrease stress associated with performance expectations. This can also promote an organization-wide culture of excellence.

8. Decentralisation: Giving employees more autonomy and decision-making ability at different levels can empower them, leading to less stress. When employees believe they have control over their work, it can reduce emotions of uneasiness and worry.

VII. FUTURE SCOPE OF STUDIES

After examining the various theories of stress, it is still necessary to conduct further research on stress management because of problems brought on by urbanization, globalization, competition, technological advancement, the COVID-19 pandemic, and other factors that led this research to continue for the foreseeable future to offer more effective recommendations for stress management and for coping mechanisms. Cannon's theory suggested future studies to examine how psychological factors impact physiological reactions to stress in greater detail, which could result in a more comprehensive analysis of the fight-or-flight response, whereas Selye's suggested a holistic approach to stress research for future development, combining biological, psychological, and social viewpoints to improve individual understanding of stress and its effects on health. Every organization aims at maximizing profit, and it needs skilled workers and stress-free employees to gain a competitive edge in the market. Hence, making employees happy and employing tactics to reduce stress at work is vital. Therefore, developing the best possible stress management plan would be a critical aspect of organizational development.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Stress research developed by different psychologists has a variety of ideas and strategies to deal with challenging situations, depending on how stressed an individual is and how easily they can access the various strategies. The theories explain how stress can affect individuals differently, and stress can also occur due to poor social structure and working conditions. The methods employed in this study can help us better

understand how stress affects humanity and how to overcome and manage stress required for a productive and healthy life. The result can point out the significance of stress management for an individual and the organization, particularly in managing stress at work to avoid poor performance and chronic illness. There should be widespread knowledge of stress management in every workplace, as it is necessary to handle challenging, stressful situations effectively.

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