



PERSONALITY AND STRESS

DR. PRABIR BERA

Asst. Professor,
Subash Chandra Basu B.Ed Training College
Jararnagar, Heria, Purba Medinipur,
(West Bengal) INDIA.

ABSTRACT

Recent years have witnessed an upsurge of interest in how personality affects the stress process. This paper reports on a broad spectrum of findings on the relationships between personality and stress, taking transactional stress theory as the point of departure. A first part outlines the different approaches stress research has taken within personality psychology as opposed to research based on transactional stress theory and discusses the debate between these two paradigms. The second part gives an overview of empirical findings, with a focus on the Big Five personality factors, in order to demonstrate that personality affects the stress process in every aspect. The discussion suggests that we address unresolved problems of transactional stress research in the framework of interactionism personality psychology. Special attention ought to be given to developing a better understanding of situational characteristics, stress-producing mechanisms, and the functions of situational choices and coping strategies for personality

INTRODUCTION

There is a deep relationship between "personality and stress". In the present world these two concepts have attained a very important role. Stress plays a very important role in every day life of an individual and is present in one form or another. Stress affects the personality as well as the performance of a person. If we understand the relation between stress and the personality, how they affect each other we will be able to channelize and manage stress in a better way. Stress won't affect individual's personality in a negative way. Due to the relationship between personality and stress you come to know that how personality affects the stress and how stress affects the personality, how it affects your work, your relationship with other people, personal life, peace of mind, are influenced. If you will understand this dynamic relationship you will lead a successful life. You will be able to perform better and would receive appreciation and should give a boost to your self esteem, by dynamic, it is meant that personality affects stress and stress affects personality.

Personality:

Personality is the product of a culture to do different things in different situations; it is affected by the environment, family, norms and values, society. The society produces different types of people or individuals. These individuals perform different tasks at different times under different situations. In other words the culture/society/environment produces a different person in an army man, in a teacher, in a student and in a sweeper etc. these individuals have to perform different tasks in the society.

This aspect of personality is linked with stress. Stress is situation where there are demands on a person.

1. Social demands:

To act or, perform in a certain way, if the person is unable to perform according to the demands of a situation, the pressure emerges. If that pressure is channelized and the person is able to perform the task then that pressure is normal stress, positive stress or u-stress, or we may say it is something good that out of the pressure or stress the person is able to perform better. There is so much demand on the individual to do few things that if a person is not capable of doing, then the person starts feeling the stress or the pressure. If this pressure is prolonged it may transform into stress. If a stress is putting some thing positive on you to do something in a given period of time it is called u-stress and u-stress is some thing good because it makes you able to achieve something. And if you achieve some thing you feel good about it. But if the stress is too much you will have negative consequences on your health, on your person as a whole, and on your work performance. The same situation may be stressful for one person but may not be stressful for the other person, depending on the personality type. People handle stress differently. This leads to two types of stress.

Two types of stress

a. Positive stress-it is called u-stress; you perform well due to this stress. e.g. Stress in exams makes you achieve better marks in the examination.

b. Negative stress: if you can't adjust to the demands of the situation then the stress is prolonged then this negative stress affects on your performance, your health and your over all personality.

2. Organizational demands:

The organizations have certain expectations; they require their employees to fulfill certain tasks. This also puts stress on the employees and the workers. If the organization demands

some sort of work from the employee which he knows he will not be able to perform well. The person should say no rather than putting extra stress on himself for something he can not do, or if some one has to do some thing too challenging for them then they should first attempt to divide the work into smaller tasks, do the first part of it. If he succeeds then go on to the next part. In this way he will be able to manage the tasks.

3.Situational demands:

Stress emerges out of expectations, situational expectations, cultural expectations, organizational expectations, and family expectations all these expectations make you work. If you work according to the situation there should be no stress. Suppose if a person from Pakistani culture travels to Europe, there are different expectations of that society for you to act in a particular way. Your training, potential, socialization is from your Pakistani culture but the demands of the immigrant society are different. You do not know the very day routines and norms of that society and the demands and expectations of that society are different. Such a situation can even have another aspect let's say if a person is well adjusted in an organization, is performing well, knows the hierarchy of commands etc. but if he is transferred to another company or if he changes his job he may not fit in as the expectations of that organization may be different but you are trained in different organizations. What is the reason that you are good in one organization but miss fit in the other organization? Disconnect or dissonance between the personality and expectations of that organization, results into some sort of stress. If you learn and adjust quickly to the new environment the stress is channelized. Then it is positive stress. Your own expectations are a major source of stress. They give pressure to you and if your expectations are too high to achieve those success and you don't have the sources. Your expectations should be according to your capabilities. When you achieve your targets you feel happy about it. Stress is a natural outcome to achieve your goals. Balance between your capabilities and your expectations.

To sum up this discussion it is stated that the greater the capacity of an individual, lesser are the chances of the stress. Match or this relationship needs to be understood. If you feel that you are capable and confident to do certain thing, only then take the challenge, but if you feel you can't succeed then you may say that you won't be able to do this. That is how you will actually gain more and more confidence in yourself, and you will perform better and better in future. So this dynamism needs to be understood very well, to succeed in your life in your work place, in your friends, and in your relations. This relation ship between stress and personality remains important for you to understand.

Personal tools to control stress

Tools of stress and personality enhance the work performance of a person. It is your self confidence to do things.

Self perception

One of those tools is self perception. How do you value and evaluate yourself? It is probably the most important psychological factor. Self perception is the picture you hold about your self. Feel that you are good, strong and best but this self perception should be realistic as this is very important that how this picture does comes to your head? How it emerges out of your relations with other people, your family members, your friends, your work mates' etc. When you perform well they appreciate you and gives you feed back that you perform excellently. It gives you a picture of yourself which you attain by interacting with others. Self perception is very important because it is an important tool in your hand to act according to the expectations of the others. Self perception in a way gives you self confidence. e.g. A boy was working in technical department the management found out he is an excellent and honest worker in the technical department they send him to the purchase department for the financial benefits of the organization. His honest brought him from one department to another department so it shows that there is a good match between quality of a person and need of the situation. On account of that there was a win-win situation "the person earned more money and the organization benefited more from him and his honesty". The picture of yours as an honest person and being acknowledged as an honest person is the self perception of that individual. Organizations value those individuals. Self perception is an important tool of an individual to do few things. Organizations value those individuals who know themselves, their self worth. Self perception contributes towards self confidence and can be improved by a systematic strategy and that is taking realistic challenges.

Self awareness:

Knowing your self is self awareness. If you know your self you know your capabilities and on the basis of these capabilities you can accomplish a task. And ultimately you will feel successful and your organization will reward you. If you know how to judge your self you can judge others also. e.g. suppose you know your leadership qualities and the strengths and weaknesses of your team members you are more likely to accomplish your task. So, self awareness is an important tool in your own hands with the help of which you can do your self analysis or can get feedback from others.

Self worth:

You should know your own worth and value of your work. Basically it is marketing of your self as well as your capabilities. The potentiality and the Power to do things are important. If you don't know yourself it means you can not market your abilities, if you know your worth and what you are giving to the organization you can tell them what you have helped the organization to accomplished, then you will valued by the organization and its members.

When the organization will reward you, it will give a boost to yourself-confidence, and will make you perform better.

Self love:

You should appreciate your self and your personality. If you don't love your self you have negative feelings about yourself which creates negative stress. Many a time your family, work mates, friends may comment on you, and if these comments are negative you feel dejected. Feelings of dejection can pull you down. You should avoid such feelings coming from any where. Feelings of dejection/failure can make you fail in life. Reject the negative comments of the others and feel good about your personality. The negative feelings can use up your energy to do positive things successfully in life. One has to make sacrifices in personal and work life. e.g. One may have to sacrifice his leisure time to do something for a loved one but these sacrifices should be realistic and too much sacrifice will be hazardous to the self.

Self esteem:

Self esteem is earned through success and is very important. Taking responsibility and accomplishing the task will help to built up self esteem. If a person is successful in life other people tell him that he is successful it will boost his self esteem giving him more confidence to take up new endeavors and to accomplish them successfully, so self esteem and success affect one another positively.

Every one, all humans make mistakes, but it is natural. One should accept one's mistakes and work on them to improve them; this will improve your self esteem. Intuition is an important source, if you feel some thing is worth doing again work towards it, if one succeeds it again enhances self esteem.

Self respect:

Your own feelings about your self are self respect; emotion is a respectable energy and a powerful source. Emotions are a powerful source of self respect. Emotions and passionate feelings makes a lot of things get done.

If you bring all the above mentioned concepts together it sums up into "self confidence". Self confidence is the totality of your personality. Enhanced self concept increases our potentiality and capabilities and makes us work in a better way.



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