

# Occupational Psychosocial Hazards

PROF. FATEN M. RABIE

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# What is a Psychosocial hazard?

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A psychosocial hazard is anything that could cause psychological harm (i.e. harm someone's mental health).

Common psychosocial hazards at work include:

job demands

low job control

poor support

lack of role clarity

poor organizational

change management

poor organizational justice

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**inadequate reward and  
recognition**

**traumatic events or  
material**

**remote or isolated work**

**poor physical environment**

**violence and aggression**

**bullying**

**harassment, including**

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**sexual and gender-based**

**harassment, and**

**conflict or poor workplace**

**relationships and**

**interactions (this may**

**include 'exclusion' from**

**work/social events)**

# Psychosocial hazards

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The psychosocial hazards arise from the workers' **failure to adapt** to work environment.

- Frustration,
- lack of job satisfaction, insecurity,
- Poor human relationships,
- Emotional tension

# Capacity to adapt to work environment

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**Capacity** to adapt to different working environments is *influenced by many factors such as :*

- *Education,*
- *Cultural* background,
- Family Life,
- Social habits, and
- what the worker expects from employment.

# How psychosocial hazards cause harm

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Psychosocial hazards can create stress. This can cause psychological or physical harm.

Stress itself is not an injury. But if workers are stressed often, over a long time, or the level of stress is high, it can cause harm.

Psychological harm may include anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disorders,

Physical harm may include musculoskeletal injuries, chronic disease or fatigue related injuries.

**Psychosocial hazards may interact and combine**

~~**Psychosocial hazards may interact or combine to create new, changed or higher risks.**~~

**It is important to consider all the psychosocial hazards workers may be exposed to when managing psychosocial risks.**

**Some hazards may not create psychosocial risks on their own but may do so if combined with other hazards.**

**For example, when workloads are high the risk may increase if workers cannot take breaks or there is no one around to help.**

**Some hazards may only create risks on their own when severe.**

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- ❖ **physical factors** (*heat, noise, poor lighting*) also **play a major role** in adding to or **precipitating** mental disorders among workers.
  - ❖ The **increasing stress on automation, electronic operations and nuclear energy** may introduce **newer psychosocial health** problems in industry.
  - Psychosocial hazards **are therefore**, assuming, **more importance** than physical or chemical

# Psychological Health Effect

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The health effects can be classified in Two Main categories:

(a) **Psychological and behavioural** changes :

including ; *hostility, aggressiveness, anxiety, depression, tardiness, alcoholism, drug abuse, sickness, absenteeism;*

(b) **Psychosomatic ill** health :

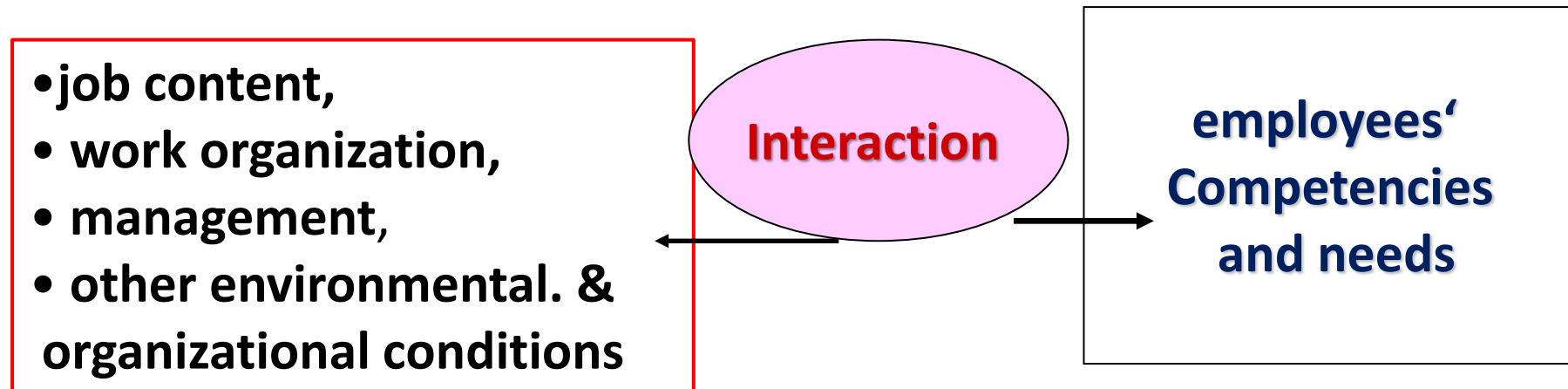
including : *fatigue, headache; pain in the shoulders, neck & back; propensity to peptic ulcer, hypertension, heart disease and rapid aging*

# Psycho-social hazards at workplace

## Definition:

defined in terms of **interactions** among **job content, work organization** and management, and **other environmental and organizational conditions**, **on the one hand**, and the **employees' competencies and needs on the other**.

As such, they refer to those **interactions** that prove to have a **hazardous influence** over employees' health through their **perceptions and experience**.



**Psychosocial risks** at the workplace have been identified as **significant emerging risks**.

**Linked to psychosocial risks, issues as:**

➤ **Work-related stress**

➤ **Workplace violence**

Both issues are **widely recognized as major** challenges to occupational health and safety

**Psychosocial risks** go hand in hand with the experience of **work-related stress**.

# Work related stress

- ❖ **Workplace stress** is an **epidemic** that has hit the workplace in the current era of **high technology**.
- ❖ **Managers must prevent stress** from affecting their workers as it is **very costly to correct the situation later**
- ❖ It is capable of **reducing productivity** resulting in the
  - ✓ **decline of the performance** of their workers.
  
- ❖ **Implementing an effective strategy**
  - ✓ will prevent organizations from bearing ,losses and
  - ✓ will enable **workers to enjoy** a healthy, harmonious and quality of life.
  - ✓ **Enhance the productivity** of the workers and organizations

# Work-related Stress

Work-related **stress** is a **pattern of reactions** that occurs when workers are presented with **work demands not matched to their knowledge, skills or abilities** and which **challenge their ability to cope**

## Work-related stress

❖ is the **response** people may have when presented with **work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities** and which **challenge their ability to cope.**

# Pressure Vs Stress

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Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is **often made worse** when employees feel:

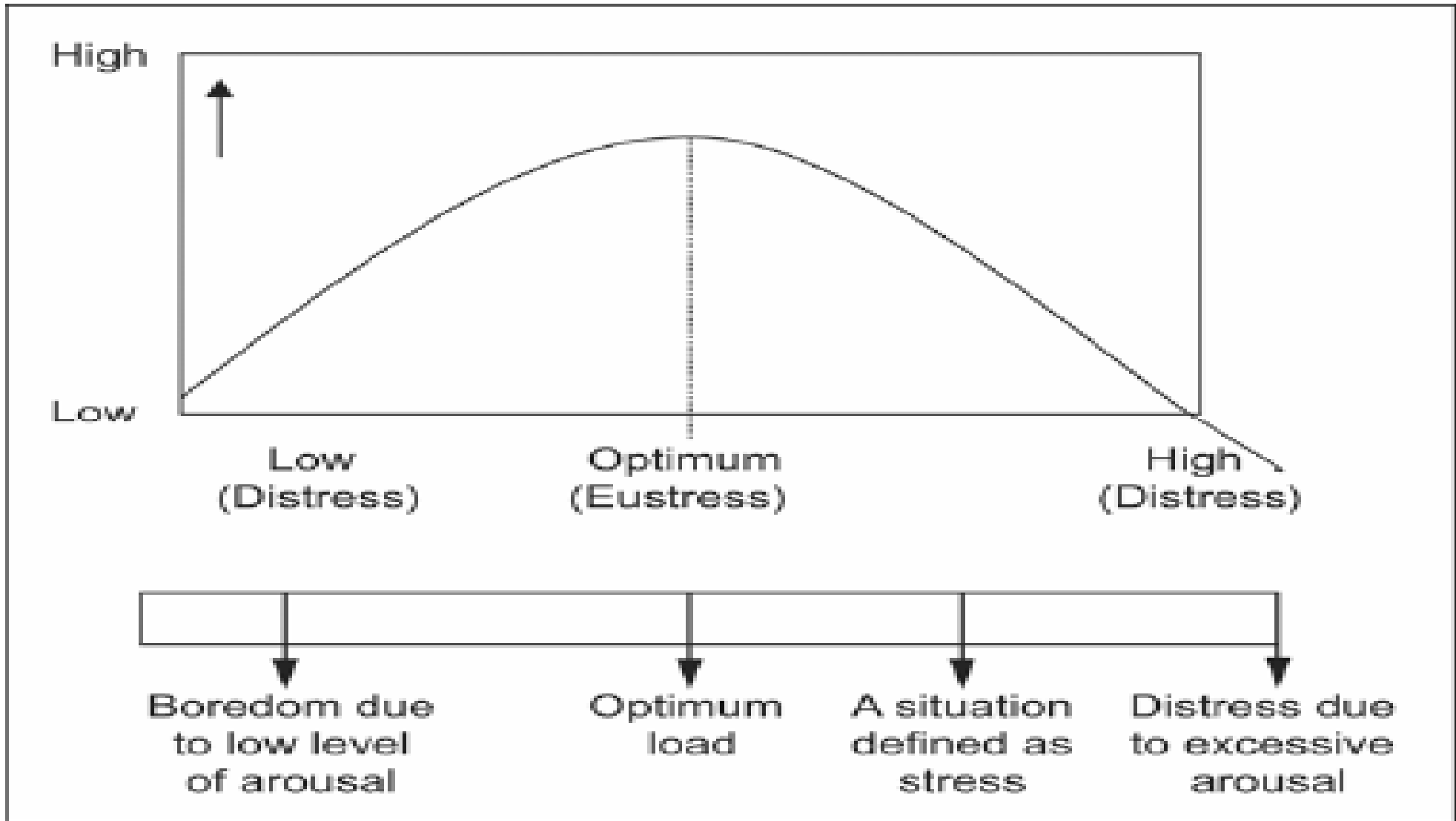
- They **have little support** from supervisors and colleagues,
  - **Little control** over work processes.
- ❖ There is often confusion between
- **pressure** or challenge and
  - **stress**

- **Pressure** at the workplace is **unavoidable** due to the demands of the modern work environment.
- **Pressure** perceived as **acceptable** by an individual, may even keep workers **alert, motivated** able to **work and learn**, depending on the available resources and personal characteristics
- when that **pressure becomes excessive** or **unmanageable** it **leads to stress**.



- ❑ **POSITIVE** type of stress that encourages workers and increase their productivity; **eustress**.
- ❑ **Eustress** is experienced moderately and is capable of motivating people to achieve their goals and succeed in completing their task.
- ❑ After the optimum level, more stress will have a **NEGATIVE** effect on the performance of workers.

- ❖ After the optimum level, more stress will have **a negative effect** on the performance of workers.
  
- ❖ A low level of arousal will also cause workers to experience distress.
  
- ❑ **Workers must be motivated** so that they can **achieve the optimum** level of arousal or stimulation in order to improve their performance.



The effects of distress can be perceived in two forms,

1. On Individuals
2. On Organizations

The effects of distress on individuals can have the following three negative effects:

- A. Psychological effects such as *depression, fatigue*
- B. Diseases such as *heart disease, stroke*
- C. Behavioral effects such as *violence, abuse of power*

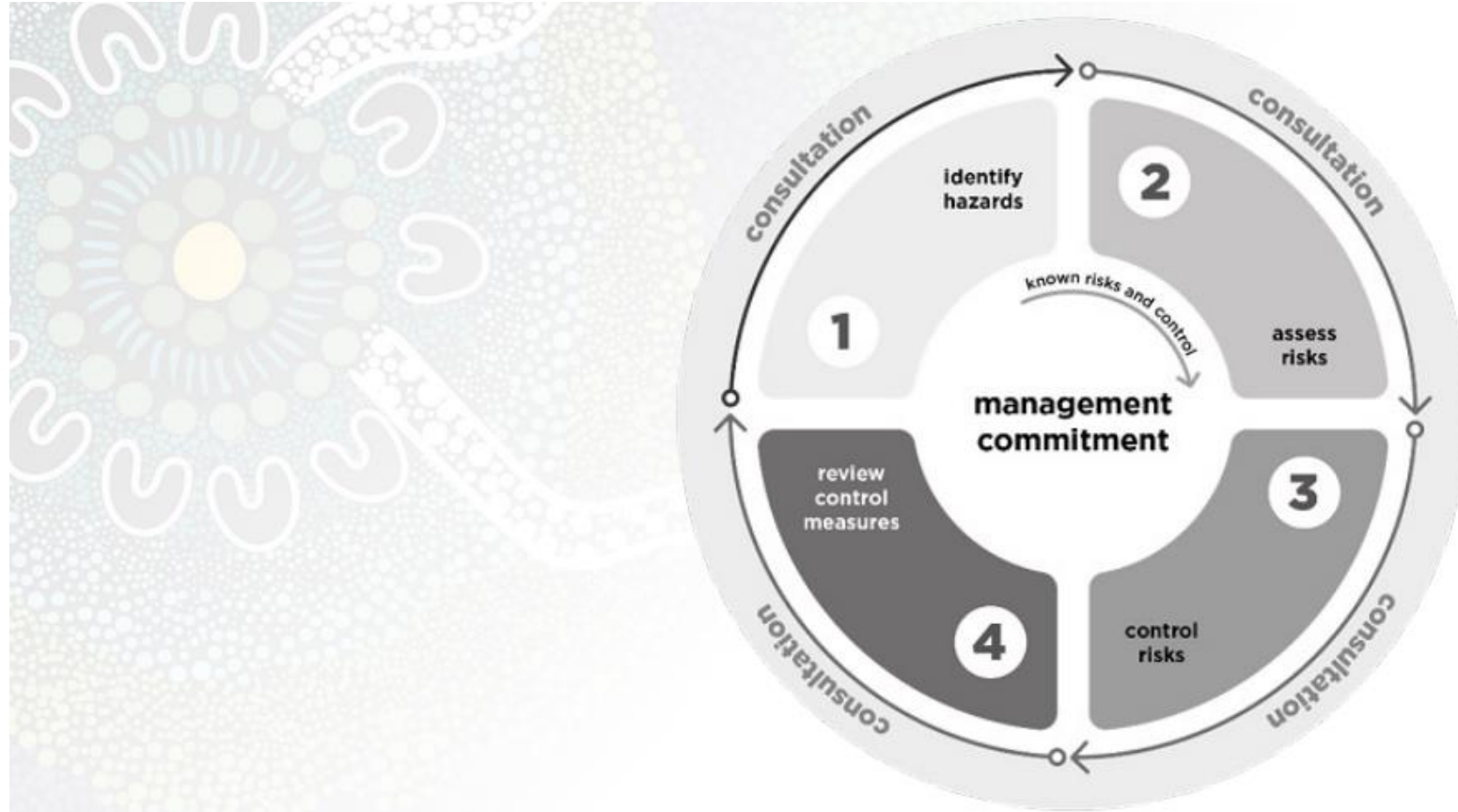
## **The effects on Organization:**

**distress will result in additional costs due to:**

- **Absenteeism,**
- **High turnover rate,**
- **Decline in workers performance,**
- **Decline in quality and productivity,**
- **Increasing compensation claims due to accidents and work-related Stress.**
- **Increasing tardiness (Slowness)**
- **Decreasing growth rates and profit**

## **Managing psychosocial risks**

- Eliminate or minimize psychosocial risks so far as is reasonably practicable.**
- Risk management process: (identifying, assessing, controls, review – a step-by-step approach)**
- Identifying the hazards**
- Assessing the associated risks**
- Implementing control measures to eliminate or minimise risks, and**
- regularly reviewing control measures to ensure they remain effective.**



For more information see [Identifying, assessing, controlling and reviewing](#)

**Thank  
you**

