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Promoting Work Well-being:
Professional Burnout &
Occupational Stress

Edited by: Alexander-Stamatios Antoniou

VOLUME C



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The content of this textbook reflects all the most recent knowledge and internationally accepted techniques as they are analyzed by experienced authors in the field, in each chapter.

Nevertheless, the authors and the editor acknowledge that every medical opinion is under the limitations of the time frame that this book was created, as well as possible mistakes that might have escaped their attention.

Readers of this textbook are encouraged to keep that in mind, while at the same time we hope that the information included will become a starting point for young colleagues or the more experienced ones, for new research projects, clinical trials or maybe an updated version of the book in the near future.

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Organizational Communication, Conflict and Job Stress: Ethical and Psychological Perspectives

Chapter

14

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Introduction

The term: "Human relations" is used in order to define the interaction and co-operation between the members of the same group or between the members of different groups. It practically refers to people and the way they react and behave towards others. At the workplace level, human relations means "the integration of people into a work situation that motivates them to work together productively, cooperatively and with economic, psychological and social satisfaction". Namely, human relations motivate people towards the development of teamwork which accordingly is going to fulfill their needs and achieve the organizational tasks. A basic aspect of human relations is the fact that they aim at producing sound grounds for the successful course of the organization since they make an emphasis on normal and cooperative interactive communication between people within the context of a firm (Carvell, 1975).

An important factor of an organization's success in the field of high levels of productivity, performance and competitiveness is considered to be employees' motivation. Accordingly, in order to promote the strategic business objectives that practically are identified with gaining the highest possible profit at the least possible cost, employers tend nowadays to reconsider and reevaluate the importance of employee motivation. As ability and skill prove the employee's qualification towards successful performance, similarly, motivation determines whether the employee will perform or not (Stone, 2002). But what is motivation? According to

Moorhead and Griffin (1998), motivation is "the set of forces that leads people to engage in one behavior rather than some alternative one". According to Robbins (1998), motivation is the "willingness of a person to exert high levels of effort towards organizational goals" under the condition that this effort will lead to the satisfaction of certain needs.

What comes out of the latter definition is that motivation is based on each individual's needs and since there is a diversity between individuals on the matter of personality, psychological characteristics, needs, values and competencies, then it is natural for a diversity of motivation to appear (Hellriegel et al., 1999). Individuals are not identical in any field of their internal and external condition. They actually differ in a variety of features such as abilities and skills, race, gender and culture, personality and psychology (matters of perception and stereotypes, attribution, attitudes and values) (Gibson et al., 2000; Rollinson, 1997).

There are multiple theories of motivation that have emerged but in the context of this chapter, we are going to refer to the three main theories. The first is "Maslow's hierarchy of needs" which includes five basic categories of needs: Psychological needs, security needs, belongingness needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs. The belongingness needs in particular, refer to the persons willingness to develop friendly relations with his co-workers that are realized on the basis of healthy communicational relationships (Carvell, 1975; Hellriegel et al., 1999; Moorhead & Griffin, 1998; Robbins, 1998; Stone, 2002).

The second is Aldefer's "ERG Theory" which is related to Maslow's theory. It includes existence needs, relatedness needs and growth needs. The relatedness needs refer to the individual's inner need for friendship and companionship. Finally the third is "the dual-structure theory" of Herzberg which identifies motivation (achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement) and hygiene (supervision, working conditions, interpersonal relationships, pay and job security) factors as the sources of work satisfaction and dissatisfaction (Hellriegel et al., 1999; Moorhead & Griffin, 1998; Robbins, 1998; Stone, 2002).

From these theories it is evident that the person does not only want to achieve salary, stability and security, but also there are inner psychological needs such as friendship and companionship which can be accomplished through healthy, cooperative and supportive relations. Accordingly, such quality of human and occupational relations can be achieved through the existence of normal and efficient communicational networks. Apparently, the communication efficacy that resides in human relations within the context of each organization is considered to be a highly important aspect of individual (and consequently organizational) well-being. That is, the person

is motivated to perform since his needs are covered. One of them is the need for healthy relations with co-workers that can be achieved through coordinated and well-ordered communication practices.

According to Carvell (1975), the role of communications is related to the quality of human relations. Actually, we may argue that communications and human relations are highly interdependent due to the fact that if there are sound human relations, then the communications are healthy and successful. And also, if the communications are good, then the relations are sound. The methods, the content and the quality of communications indicate the extent and the type of verbal and non-verbal interactions. Effective organizational communications contribute to successful downward, upward and horizontal communications by setting the foundations of mutual trust and consideration rather than conditions for complaint, frustration, dissatisfaction, aggression and conflict.

In every company that involves the presence and performance of more than one person, it is essential (for the longevity of the firm), that right and successful channels of communication through which information is sent and received are in existence. Sometimes, misunderstandings and mistakes in the information processes cannot be avoided and so important departments of the firm are left without factors which are essential for their successful performance information. This point leads to the conclusion that even under ideal conditions, it may be difficult to establish and develop sound communications (Carvell, 1975).

The main task of the present chapter is to analyze the communication processes in organizations by defining the context of effective and defective communicative human relations. Due to the fact that communication channels link all units and all members within the firm, it is important to emphasize the different kinds of communication (upwards, downwards and horizontal) as well as the problems and barriers that may appear. Defectiveness of organizational communication processes will also be emphasized, since they are considered to constitute important factors to the appearance of conflict incidents and stress.

Communication: an interactive relationship between individuals in the workplace

A general definition of the term "communication" that is admitted by the majority of scholars, is the following: "Communication is a process through which information is transmitted from a sender to a receiver" or "Communication is the process by which two or more parties exchange information and share a meaning" (Bratton &

Gold, 1999; Carrell et al., 1997; de Cenzo, 1997; Gordon, 2002; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Lowenberg et al., 1998; Moorhead & Griffin, 1995; Moorhead & Griffin, 1998; Riggio, 2000; Robbins, 1998; Torrington & Hall, 1998).

According to Carvell (1975), communication is a "two-way process in which information is accurately received and understood so that action can be taken" and according to Luthans (1981), "communication is a personal process that involves the exchange of behaviors and the use of symbols to transfer meaningful information". We should also emphasize on Luthan's further analysis because he stresses the importance of the individual's contribution to the communication processes. Namely, he uses Scramm's approach in order to stress the human aspect of communication: "Communication is something that people do. It has no life of its own. There is no magic about it except what people in the communication relationship put into it. There is no meaning in a message except what people put into it. To understand the human communication process one must understand how people relate to each other". Luthans also refers to Fisher's approach about the behavioral implications of communication: "the only means by which one person can influence another is by the behaviors he performs, that is, the communicative exchanges between people provide the sole method by which influence or effects can be achieved. The behaviors that occur in an organization are vital to the communication process" (Luthans, 1981).

Communication is defined by Hellriegel et al (1999) as the "transfer of information and understanding from one person to another through meaningful symbols. It is a way of exchanging and sharing ideas, attitudes, values, opinions and facts. It is a procedure that requires both a sender who begins the process and a receiver who completes the communication link. When the receiver understands the message, the cycle is complete".

The effectiveness or defectiveness of communication in the context of a firm is designated by a multitude of divergent factors. The first group consist of the "source factors" which simply refer to the characteristics of the sender that can either facilitate or distort the communication processes. The status of the source is one such factor and can affect whether or not the message will be received. Generally speaking, the higher the status of the source (e.g. manager), the more possible it is for the message to be received by the individuals. Another factor is the credibility of the source which is affected by the quality and level of expertise, knowledge and reliability of the source. Namely, the employee is going to trust the supervisor whom he believes is more credible than others. Another factor is the ability of the source to pass his message in an understandable way to the individuals, that is, by using the shared common "code or language" of the firm in order to make people

aware of what each one is expected to do and how exactly to do it. Specifically, it is the quality of being or not being able to speak and write clearly and to select the appropriate channel of information. The more understandable the verbal and non-verbal communication of the source is, the more effective communication will exist.

The second group includes the "*channel factors*" which basically are the main aspects that characterize the vehicle of transmission of a message and which actually affect communication. In order to achieve an accurate transmission of information, the proper channel must be selected. It is more preferable for the source to use multiple channels for the transmission of a large amount of complicated information, since it increases the probability of a sound receptivity by the receiver. The cause for a defective communication is the appearance of semantic problems in the channel factors which basically is the difference of interpretation that people have concerning the meaning of certain words or phrases. For example, if a supervisor tells an employee that he is "doing a good job", the employee may think that what the supervisor meant was that his performance was excellent or above the average. Semantic problems may also arise due to the use of the special technical language (jargon) that is developed between individuals within a firm. Despite the facilitation that jargon provides, it can lead to problems if the receiver is not yet well-acquainted to it.

The third group includes the "*audience factors*" which basically refer to the main elements of the receiver that affect the kind of communication there will be. For example, it is the individual's attention skill and perceptual abilities that can facilitate or distort communication, as well as the relationship that exists between receiver and sender. Also, a related aspect is the receiver's ability to listen and provide "feedback" to the sender (Riggio, 2000).

According to Lowenberg et al. (1998) there are more general personal factors that affect the quality of communication within the context of a firm. Namely, those factors are: cognition, selective perception, attribution, schemas, stereotypes and projection. Firstly, cognition, is defined as "the thought processes that accompany an individual's actions". Individual thought is a characteristic that is common in individuals as a basic skill, but as a content, it is divergent between people. So, there are differences among individuals concerning individual thought. When people are exposed to the same experience, it is likely that there will not be any common view on the situation which is going to be interpreted differently. The problems that can arise concerning that factor are: information overload (when too much information is provided and the person cannot easily receive it), and accordingly, the related: a) omission (when too much information is provided and the receiver fails to process some of it), b) error (when the information is processed incorrectly), c) filtering (when

some information are shifted out because they are considered to be not important), d) approximation (when the recipient generalizes all of the information and offers a blanket response), e) escaping (when the receiver does not deal with the information at all). An important aspect to consider here is the fact that information overload can cause stress and accordingly, misinterpretation and ineffective communication.

Selective perception is a kind of filter that blocks the stimuli that are not considered important and that selects only those that are meaningful. This factor, which actually is a part of cognition, allows individuals to avoid overload of information (Lowenberg et al., 1998). Perception in general is the process by which the individual gives meaning to the environment by organizing and interpreting the different stimuli that come from that environment to the person as a psychological experience (Gibson et al., 2000; Rollinson, 1997).

Attribution refers to the human tendency to judge others in a way that is based on the meanings that we attribute to certain behaviors. Actually, it is the individual's skill to explain the behavior of another person. However, this ability of the human mind, can lead to errors which refers to the occasions when we make judgments about a person with only limited information about that person or the situation in which he is involved (Gibson et al., 2000). Schemas, which are used in favor of the organization of perceptions by human thought, are generalized concepts that summarize certain important characteristics. Those characteristics include common experiences and events in a human's life, so that when we come across a situation that is similar to something that has happened to us earlier, then we are able through the schemas to categorize that situation into the group of similar ones. The initial experience creates an internal schema with which future similar experiences will be linked. Cognitive schemas are related to the receptivity of information because they have an important impact on what kind of information is attended to, whether information is encoded and stored, and whether it will be retrieved (Lowenberg et al., 1998).

Stereotypes are special types of schemas that categorize people who share certain traits or characteristics into specific groups. It is a general belief about people's personal characteristics that leads to the fact that they are actually put into certain categories of people who share common characteristics (Gibson et al., 2000; Gray & Starke, 1980; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Rollinson, 1997; Torrington & Hall, 1998). So, in the context of the firm, the existence of certain stereotypes may have negative effects on the communication networks. For example, if the stereotype: "women are weak and cannot perform successfully" reigns, then a male co-worker may refuse to share his information with his female colleagues. This action, will lead to

the appearance of defective communication that is going to have a negative impact on the well-being of the organization. Projection is the human characteristic according to which people have the assumption that others are similar or identical to themselves. In that case, the person sees his/her own qualities and attributes in other people (Gray & Starke, 1980; Rollinson, 1997).

The communication process

The basic process of communication between two or more people is the following: the sender has a message which he encodes (that is the conversion of the message to a symbolic form) and he passes it through a communication channel in order to send it to the receiver. The receiver on the other hand, decodes the message he has received and so, the cycle of communication between people is completed. The encoding process of the sender is considered to be of high importance due to the fact it affects the quality of the communication. If I encode a message in a way that the other person cannot receive because he does not understand it, then my action is unsuccessful. For example, if I write a message to a person in an incomprehensible way, then the receiver cannot take my message.

The message is the product of the encoding that the sender makes and it is affected by the code or group of symbols that we use in order to transfer a meaning, the content of the message itself and the decisions that we make when we select and arrange the codes and the content. The channel is the medium through which the message passes in order to get to the receiver. The sender of the message selects which channel is going to be used: either the formal or the informal. The receiver is the person to whom the message is originally directed and when he receives it, he must decode it in order to understand it. The receiver may not understand the message if he is not qualified no matter how simply that message is written or said. His knowledge, his attitudes and cultural background influence his ability to receive the message.

The final step in the communication process is the feedback where the original receiver becomes the sender of a message towards the original sender who now becomes receiver. The original receiver encodes a response and sends it to the original sender. This new message is decoded and interpreted. Feedback, in that case, works as a comprehension check since it shows the original sender how well or accurately their message was understood. The communication process may be distorted by any kind of noise that may interfere with the transmission and understanding of the message (Bratton & Gold, 1999; Gordon, 2002; Hellriegel et al., 1999; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Mullins, 1999; Riggio, 2000).

Directions of communication

The possible directions of communications may be three: downward, upward and horizontal. Downward communication flows from a higher level of the hierarchy within a firm towards a lower level and refers to the directives that a supervisor sends to his subordinates. The group leaders and managers assign goals, provide job instructions, inform about future procedures, point out problems and offer feedback (positive or negative). Upward communication starts from a lower level and flows towards a higher level. Its purpose is to provide feedback, to give new ideas about the firm's economic and investing future movements and to send information about progress and current problems. So, the managers are kept informed about the conditions in the lower levels of the hierarchy within the context of the firm.

Horizontal or lateral communication takes place between members of the same group that belong to the same hierarchical level. It is a useful kind of communication because it permits the facilitation and coordination concerning the cooperative actions between different departments within a firm. The horizontal communication channels, apart from their positive impact, may have negative consequences as well, since they can be the source of dysfunctional conflict when the formal vertical channels are breached. This means that the superiors may be by-passed or there may be actions that have taken place without the knowledge of the managers (Gordon, 2002; Miller, 2006; Robbins, 1998).

Formal and informal networks

Communication networks may be constituted by two kinds of channels: the formal and the informal channels of communication. The formal channels are the typical vertical communications that flow from the top of the hierarchy which is the manager towards the employees, the lower level. Their purpose is to transfer the orders of the supervisor to the employees. On the other hand, we have the informal channels which basically refer to the "grapevine". The informal channels do not have a specific direction and they can skip authority levels. The grapevine has three main characteristics: first, it cannot be controlled by the management. Second, it is considered by most of the employees to be more believable and reliable than the formal communication from the top. Third, it serves the self-interests of the people involved in it. Conclusively, the grapevine is an unofficial and unauthorized way of communicating within a company (Riggio, 2000; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001).

But here rises the following question: "Is the information that derives from the gra-

pevine accurate?". It is indicated by evidence that 75% of what is carried is accurate. The grapevine is an important part of the organizational communication channels which acts like a filter and a feedback mechanism (Carrell et al., 1997; Robbins, 1998).

Barriers to effective communication

Effective communication can become defective if certain conditions occur which are the following. The first is filtering, which is the manipulative effort or action of the sender in order to change the negative character of information, aimed at making the receiver see it more favorably. The basic element here is the personal interests and perceptions of the sender about what is important to say and what is not. The immediate result is that the manager cannot have accurate or full information about the arising issues, so he cannot take the appropriate decision.

Selective perception is the second barrier to effective communication and it refers to the receiver's behavior which is characterized by a selective tendency towards information gathering according to the receiver's needs, expectations, interests and motivation. Defensiveness is the third barrier and it appears when people feel threatened by a certain situation. In that case, they tend to reduce their ability to achieve mutual understanding and they become defensive. That is, they express anger, they attack other people, they make sarcastic remarks, they are overly judgmental and they question the others' motives. When a person defines the other's behavior as threatening, then he is going to make a defensive response. The result will be the appearance of defective communication.

Finally, the last barrier is the language. Words mean different things to different people. The definition each person gives to special words and behaviors is based on his age, his educational level and his cultural background. The problem of defective communication arises when senders send their messages and they do not take into consideration the fact that the receiver may not be able to understand them (Gordon, 2002; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Torrington & Hall, 1998).

Communication: Ethical and psychological issues

The overload information that is sent to a receiver can have a negative impact on a person's psychological balance since it brings up stressful feelings. Each person has a different amount of information that they are able to receive and understand. So, when the individual capability is not taken into account by the sender, the total amount of messages received is overwhelming. The person develops emotions of an-

xiety and stress. He believes that he cannot cope and he is frustrated. Specifically, he may be devastated if his career means everything to him. So, how ethical can that be? How ethical is the manager who gives an overwhelming amount of information or directives? The answer is that he is totally unethical and his action is condemned both by utilitarianism and deontology. According to utilitarianism, an action is defined as ethical if it brings the highest amount of happiness for the greatest number of persons (Green, 1994). Obviously, such a managerial act does not lead to general happiness but to exhaustion.

According to deontology, people have a right to be treated with respect and no one has the right to use others as a means to achieving a certain self-interest. According to the Kantian Perspective, there is a principle which must rule in interpersonal relations: "never use the others only as means but as ends as well". This means that each individual must be valued not as a potential profit importer to the firm, but as a human being that deserves respect. People are autonomous, responsible and self-governable. So, they have ethical judgment and according to Kant, they have self-dignity as well and conclusively they must be objects of respect (Bowie, 1999; Boylan, 1995; French, 1995). So the ethical character of the manager who overloads his subordinates with information is severely questionable.

Concerning the three directions of communication that we have already mentioned, there are a few emerging ethical dilemmas. In the case of downward communication, how ethical is a manager who imposes on the employees directives that are constantly against their personal ethical systems? In general, we can admit the existence of certain ethical principles that are uniquely understood and accepted. But also, there are ethical principles that each one of us carries in him and that are the basic aspects of his psychological stability. For example, if the directive of the manager is that each employee should betray the person who is a secret whistle-blower, then, there are going to be two different kinds of people: those who are actually going to betray the potential whistle-blower and those who will not. The second group automatically passes through an emotional disturbance because on the one hand, such a person has to be loyal to his firm and work towards the firm's well-being. On the other, he has to obey his personal ethics that give emotional stability. Obviously, he is in a dual situation where in both cases there are certain things and actions that are expected to be done by him. And that is why he is emotionally stressed. How ethical is such a manager who coerces his employees to violate their ethical principles? Obviously, he is unethical.

Finally, how ethical are "filtering" and "selective perception"? We could claim that "filtering" is a kind of censorship because the sender is giving a certain previously

examined message to the receiver. The employee, who has to tell his employer the bad news about the destructive investment of his firm, hides an amount of information. How ethical is the action of the employee? We cannot assert that it is ethical because he consciously hides the necessary information from his employer and thus, the manager is not fully informed. Accordingly, he cannot take the proper decision about the company's course of action. And thus, the company's longevity and well-being is at serious risk.

"Selective perception" on the other hand can be characterized as distortion of reality that may have its source in the individual's inner psychological need to avoid the truth. The person in that case, receives what he wants to receive and not what he has to. Accordingly, if a manager acts in such a way, he endangers his firm because he is not fully informed and he cannot make the necessary economic movements. This reaction of the person jeopardizes the well-being of the firm and thus, it is not in concordance with the utilitarian view which asserts that our actions must lead to the happiness of the largest possible number of people.

Conflict: When communication fails

When the flow of information from top to bottom or from bottom to top or between equal co-workers is problematic, the individuals do not have the proper and necessary information. Some of them have better information than others and others are not fully informed. Thus, they cannot engage in the appropriate performance that is going to bring profit in the firm. On the contrary, due to the lack of communication between individuals and between departments, it is highly likely that conflict will occur.

In that case we are referring to an unhealthy and destructive disagreement that appears between a number of people and is defined as "dysfunctional conflict". This situation leads to: an increased hostility and aggressive behaviors, a negative climate, the destruction of cohesion, the waste of resources and the threatening of individuals' psychological well-being. The contrary situation to devastating dysfunctional conflict is functional conflict which is the opposite: it is a kind of disagreement but it is characterized as healthy and constructive. The immediate results are: the appearance of new ideas, the stimulation of creativity, promotion of organizational vitality and the existence of a safety mechanism in the context of the firm that has one task: the indication of problems. Conclusively, functional conflict results in the benefit of the organization, whereas, dysfunctional conflict hinders organizational performance (Buchanan & Huczynski, 1997; Gibson et al., 2000; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996; Nelson & Quick, 2006).

In the last case, we should mention that this particular kind of conflict does not have its origins in the problematic communication networks but it derives from the creative disagreement in which people are engaged in order to find the best possible solution and the most effective decision-making. Namely, it does not have to do with insufficient information. In functional conflict, people work out their disagreements and improve their working relationships, and thus, the firm is led towards innovation and positive change. According to Gordon (2002) there are several factors that define whether a conflict is functional or dysfunctional. Those factors are:

- *The sociocultural context* which basically refers to the differences between individuals on the grounds of their sociocultural background. In that case it is possible that dysfunctional conflict and an increased hostility will arise.
- *Issues involved* which is the number and quality of the issues that the organization has to cope with and engage in a certain performance. Dysfunctional conflict is likely to arise in cases where there are issues that are highly significant and complex and that have existed for a long time.
- *Cognitive frame* which refers to the attitude and behavior that people decide to adopt. It is either cooperative or competitive. In the first case the outcome will be a functional conflict and in the second case the result will be a dysfunctional conflict.
- *Characteristics of the conflicting parties* which refers to the knowledge, the experiences and the personal styles of the parties that may lead to the appearance of functional or dysfunctional conflict.
- *Misjudgments and misperceptions* which refers to the appearance of errors in perceptions and attributions. In that case, the people involved do not have the proper information but they perform on the basis of inaccurate information and thus, an existing conflict may be exaggerated or new disagreements may emerge.

A conflict can appear due to structural or personal factors. Structural factors refer to the aspects that are related to the organization's general structure including fields of specialization, interdependence, common resources, differences in goals and authority relationships. Personal factors, that are going to be emphasized in the context of the present chapter, refer to the individual differences that emerge in the organization. Those differences are based on individuals' skills and abilities, on individuals' personalities, perceptions, values, ethics and culture (Dubrin, 1981; Gibson et al., 2000; Gray & Starke, 1980). There are also differences in emotions and in communication levels. Emotions and communication in particular, will be emphasized here.

Emotions can be a source of conflict especially when there are negative feelings in other parts of a person's life. Then it is possible for a spill-over of those feelings in the workplace to take place. So, there are conflicts that derive their source from the unhealthy personal life and relationships (out of work) of the individual. Conflict has to do with emotions since it comes from their intense expression between individuals. And also, emotions play an important role in the negotiation process since they can facilitate or block it.

Communication barriers are also considered to be an important cause of conflict and they basically refer to physical separation and language that can create distortions in messages. These distortions lead to conflict. Value judgment is also a communication barrier which refers to the fact that the person who receives a message makes judgments about it before he fully receives it. In that case as well, conflict may emerge (Nelson & Quick, 2006). Communications between groups who are already in conflict usually are interrupted and thus, the performance of those groups is dysfunctional, especially when their assignments are interdependent. As a result, the performance and well-being of the whole firm is in jeopardy. In that case, managerial intervention is considered to be of critical importance (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1996).

Conflict: Ethical and psychological issues

In cases of conflict, the involved parties usually develop negative feelings such as frustration, which leads them to exhibit defense mechanisms. Those mechanisms can be either aggressive or compromising or withdrawal. Aggressive mechanisms usually include dysfunctional behavior that makes the solution to the problem difficult, anger towards people who are not the source of the problem and active or passive resistance. The mechanisms that involve compromise usually include efforts of the individual in order to make up for an inadequacy by putting increased energy into another activity.

There are also efforts of identification according to which the person is trying to pattern his own behavior after another's, and finally there are actions of rationalization according to which a person justifies inconsistent or undesirable behavior by providing uncertain explanation. Withdrawal mechanisms include reactions such as abandonment of the working field due to the frustrating emotions that a person has experienced within it, conversion (emotional conflicts are expressed through body reactions) and fantasy (the person is trying to escape from reality) (Nelson & Quick, 2006).

From these different psychological defensive reactions of a person who experien-

ces anxiety and frustration in the workplace, derives a series of multiple ethical issues. First, concerning the aggressiveness, we should mention that in that particular case, the person is reacting as an "ethical egoist" who is interested only in his self-interest and fulfillment. To the "ethical egoist" the action that has a positive impact on him is considered to be ethical (Green, 1994). He thinks that his behavior is ethical because it will result in his own compensation without taking into consideration the feelings or the condition of others. Thus, such behavior, is opposed to the principles of utilitarianism and deontology. That is, the aggressiveness of a person, by no means has as a basic purpose the achievement of happiness for more people and it does not entail respect towards the others.

The compromise or withdrawal mechanisms, on the other hand, also have self-interest as a main target, but they do not result in the expansion of the negative climate. The person is an "ethical egoist" since he is trying to fulfill his needs, but by no means is he causing harm to others. So, we could say that he is not negatively affecting the other peoples' happiness, but on the contrary, his effort can bring stabilization of the working conditions and reversion of the negative climate. He is not being disrespectful to the others because instead of "staying" and quarreling, he decides to cooperate or just leave. Accordingly, we may claim that these two defense mechanisms are in accordance with the three ethical theories: egoism, utilitarianism and deontology.

Stress and emotional intelligence

According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1996), stress is "*an adaptive response, moderated by individual differences, that is a consequence of any action, situation or event that places special demands on a person*". According to Carrell et al (1997), stress is "*a discrepancy between an employee's perceived state and desired state, when such a discrepancy is considered important by the employee. Stress influences two behaviors: a) the employee's psychological and physical well-being and b) the employee's efforts to cope with the stress by preventing or reducing it*". According to Robbins (1998), stress is defined as "*a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important*".

From the above definitions, we may extract one conclusion: that there are many kinds of definitions about stress which vary from a totally negative one to a neutral one (e.g. by Robbins, 1998). The neutral meaning is explained by the fact that, as Robbins (1998) points out, stress is not necessarily bad in itself. Actually it can have either a positive meaning or a negative one. Thus, there are two kinds of stress: eu-

stress which is a positive form of stress. It gives energy and stimulation to the individual and makes him more creative and productive. Distress, on the other hand, is a negative form of stress and leads to decreased level of performance, satisfaction and commitment (Carrell et al., 1997; Gordon, 2002).

Nelson and Simmons (2005), examined thoroughly the first kind of stress: eustress, and presented certain research evidence concerning its influence on human psychology and well-being. In particular, they mention the Edwards & Cooper writings, according to which eustress can be associated with the appearance of well-being conditions for a human being. Thus, eustress can directly affect the individual by the appearance of hormonal or biochemical changes or indirectly by facilitating the coping mechanism against distress. They also mention Sales' evidence according to which eustress is related to an improvement in physiological functions.

The negative sense of stress: distress is associated with constraints and demands. Constraints prevent the person from fulfilling his desires and demands refer to the loss of something desired. Potential stress, in order to become actual stress, there must be two conditions. The first condition is the existence of uncertainty concerning the outcome of the individual's effort or performance. The second condition is that the expected outcome must be characterized as being of high importance. Stress usually emerges when there is doubt whether the expected or desired result of the effort or performance will arise. Accordingly, stress is higher in people who feel uncertain about the gaining or losing of the goal. Another factor is the importance of the outcome: if the outcome is very important for the individual, then stress is higher, but if there is no importance in the result of a certain performance, then there is no stress (Robbins, 1998).

Causes of stress

There are many different factors that lead to the appearance and development of stressful feelings. Those factors can be divided in two main categories: the factors that are related to work and the factors that are out of the working field. Concerning work, there is an overwhelming amount of work demands that cause strain. The demands concerning work are divided into: task demands, role demands, interpersonal demands and physical demands. The nonwork demands on the other hand include: home demands and personal demands.

In the workplace, *task demands* refer to *changes* that were created by globalization leading to job-pressure and stress. Change leads to uncertainty, that is the inca-

pability of measuring and predicting a person's daily tasks and activities. The immediate result is the appearance of insecurity which is related to difficult economic conditions. *Lack of control* is also included in the group of task demands and it usually develops in psychologically demanding working environments. It appears when it is impossible for the individual to have an influence on the tasks and activities in which he is obliged to be involved. It also appears when the individual is not free to choose the methods and the means by which he is going to perform and achieve the firm's objectives. These conditions are confirmed by the evidence of research, according to which, male workers in occupations where there are low job autonomy and high demands, suffer a greater amount of heart attacks than the rest of the male workers. *Career progress, new technologies, time pressure and work overload* can also cause stress to an individual (Dessler, 2000; Harris, 1997; Nelson & Quick, 2006; Riggio, 2000).

Role demands include role conflict and role ambiguity. *Role conflict* results from inconsistency or incompatible expectations communicated to a person. The conflict may be interrole, intrarole or person-role. Interrole conflict is caused by conflicting expectations related to two separate roles, for example: employee and parent. Intrarole conflict is caused by conflicting expectations related to a single role, for example, the employee only. A situation where an intrarole conflict may exist is when an employee experiences extreme pressure in order to work fast and produce a high-quality work as well. The person-role conflict arises when there are ethics violations and particularly when the employees are expected to violate their personal values, beliefs and ethics in order to perform in favor of the firm. In that case, the person has a sense of divided loyalty towards his employer and the firm.

Role ambiguity is the confusion that a person experiences when he is unaware of what exactly the others expect him to do. Namely, the person does not know what he has to do, how to do it and what the outcome is going to be. In that case it is likely that person will develop stressful emotions (Bratton & Gold, 1999; Nelson & Quick, 2006; Riggio, 2000).

According to Mullins (1999) role conflict and role ambiguity are strongly related since role ambiguity is considered to be a part of role conflict. Thus, role conflict may include the following: role incompatibility, role ambiguity, role overload and role underload. The result of role conflict is role stress. Although a certain amount of stress may have positive results such as a level of creative stimulation that brings effectiveness. But we should also take into consideration that stress is a source of tension, frustration and dissatisfaction. It can lead to difficulties in communication and interpersonal relationships and can affect morale, effectiveness and health.

Miller (2006) goes further by arguing that the stressful factors which lead to exhaustion are work overload, role conflict and role ambiguity. Work overload is related to exhaustion in quality, since the employee is coerced to present high levels of performance, and in quantity, since the employee has to present too many results of high levels of performance. Through these three stressful factors, communication may also be involved and considered to be responsible for employee's exhaustion. Namely, through communication networks, people get more work overload: information overload and complex information can cause stress. The stressful feeling that is connected to information overload depends on the individual's ability to receive and work out the information. Information overload as well as information underload can lead to exhaustion. In the latter case, when people get less information than needed, then they suffer from boredom and monotony because they only have to cope with the same boring duties without having the opportunity to do something new and satisfying.

According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1996) there are two types of work overload: quantitative and qualitative. The first appears when the person has too many things to do or is given insufficient time to do them. The second occurs when individuals have the impression that they do not have the ability to fulfill their duties or that the standards are set too high for them.

Interpersonal demands include emotional toxins, sexual harassment and poor leadership. *Emotional toxins* are generated at work due to abrasive personalities and can cause a range of problems and disturbances. *Sexual harassment* creates a stressful working environment for both the harassed person and others. The usual victims of sexual harassment are women. *Poor leadership* causes feelings of insecurity for the employees because they feel secure only if they know that they are supervised by a strong and directive manager (Nelson & Quick, 2006). According to Riggio (2000) interpersonal stress stems from difficulties in developing and maintaining relationships with other people in the workplace. Such situations usually stem from the existence of a critical and punitive supervisor who coerces the employees and the appearance of conflict between co-workers.

Physical demands include extreme environments, strenuous activities, hazardous substances and the case of global travel. On the other hand, we have *home demands* which exist out of the working field of an employee which are related to his family duties. Finally, *personal demands* which are also a part of nonwork demands, usually refer to self-imposed personal demands. A major example of such personal bias is *workaholism*. It is characterized as a form of addiction which usually starts with: an overcommitment to work, inability to enjoy activities out of the working fi-

eld, preoccupation with work problems even when the person is out of the workplace and constantly taking work home (Nelson & Quick, 2006).

The consequences of stress

Stress can negatively affect the individual, who may then develop physiological, psychological and behavioral symptoms. According to Robbins (1998), stress can cause changes in metabolism, increase heart and breathing rates, increase blood pressure, bring on headaches and induce heart attacks. According to Carrell et al (1997), the physical symptoms are identified with a change in physical appearance, complaints about headaches, backaches or gastrointestinal problems, increased absenteeism for health reasons, signs and symptoms of depression such as a change in weight, eating habits or chronic fatigue and finally, frequent infections, especially respiratory ones. According to Ivancevich & Matteson (1996), the physiological consequences of stress include: increased heart rate, elevated blood pressure, sweating, hot and cold flashes, increased blood glucose levels and elevated stomach acid production. The most important negative impact of stress on human health is the appearance of coronary heart disease (CHD).

Cartwright & Whatmore (2005), referring to CHD, present the relationship between heart illness and personality Type A which is characterized by a set of behaviors that reflect an individual's strong sense of time urgency, competitive drive and sense of hostility. In the working environment, those behaviors are represented by a tendency to work long hours, cut short holidays, report excessive workloads, feeling that the person is misunderstood by his colleagues. Thus, he feels frustrated and irritated when he deals with his co-workers. According to the research made by the Western Collaborative Group, Type A males were found to be twice as likely to suffer from CHD. Generally speaking, Type A people experience higher levels of anxiety, daily hassles and job stress than their type B colleagues. In addition, Type A people report poorer levels of physical health, more injuries, accidents and illnesses. According to Zeidner (2005), occupational stress leads to CHD, but it also leads to certain forms of cancer, mental disease and breakdown, poor health behaviors, family problems, job dissatisfaction and accidents.

Finally, Miguel-Tobal & González-Ordi (2005), emphasize on the model of the physiologist Hans Selye: the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) which describes a series of body reactions and responses to stressful conditions. The GAS includes three main stages: the first stage is called the *alarm reaction* stage where there is first a reaction of the body characterized by sympathoadrenal hyperreactivity and a reaction that mobilizes the organism to recover homeostasis. The second stage is the *resistance*

stage where there are high arousal levels in order to make the organism capable of adapting to the stressful situation. The third stage is the *exhaustion stage* where there is a breakdown of the organism due to the lack of resources and energy that the body was previously spending in order to respond to the environmental conditions of arousal levels. During the two last stages, there are increased levels of catecholamines, corticosteroids and glucose, increased heart rate and blood pressure, increased sweating and pupil dilation.

Apart from the physiological reactions, there are also the psychological and behavioral problems caused by stress. According to Riggio (2000), job stress can lead to depression and anxiety and it can also contribute to alcoholism and drug abuse. Other consequences of stress are: emotional exhaustion, detachment from co-workers, negative self-evaluations and lowered self-esteem. But the most important result of stress is "burnout" which is likely to appear when an employee is engaged in unresolved interpersonal conflict or if there is a lack of clearly defined work tasks and responsibilities, extreme overwork, lack of appropriate rewards or presence of inappropriate punishment. When the person becomes a victim of "burnout" then there are feelings of less loyalty to the firm and emotions of withdrawal. Withdrawal may become evident when behaviors such as increased tardiness, absenteeism and decreased work performance, emerge.

According to Greenglass (2005), burnout is inconsistent with a sense of self-determination or self-efficacy. It diminishes the potentials for subsequent effectiveness. According to Leiter and Maslach (2005), burnout is a syndrome of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy experienced by people in their work life. Burnout usually occurs in three phases: the first phase is *emotional exhaustion* which is caused by the excessive demands on the worker by his supervisors. The second phase is *depersonalization* which basically refers to the development of a cynical, insensitive attitude towards people in the working field. The third phase is characterized by feelings of *low personal accomplishment* where the person feels frustrated and helpless (Riggio, 2000). According to Shirom and Melamed (2005), burnout affects a person's mental and physical health by increasing suicidal feelings, depression, anxiety and somatic complaints, by causing cardiovascular disease, infectious illness, cancer, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and musculoskeletal disorders.

Stress and burnout: Ethical issues

The arising ethical issue has to do with the personality of the employees hired by the companies: a person who is about to be hired by a firm, passes certain personality

tests. Those tests show what kind of personality the employee has is. If he is a Type A personality, then it is a company policy to hire him because he is more competent or more of a workaholic than a Type B person. And thus, he is the proper person for the high rank post. In that case, the company hires a person who is more likely to suffer in a few years from excessive stress which will lead to burnout. The arising ethical issue is "why would a company hire someone in order to harm them?". Of course, there is going to be a large amount of profit for that company, but such treatment is against the ethical theory of deontology, since the person is not respected and he is not treated like a human being by his firm, but he is viewed only as a means towards the accomplishment of the company's objectives.

So, this attitude of most of the firms is totally against the Kantian Perspective which claims that human beings have dignity and are worthy of respect by others who should not treat them only as means but as ends as well. We could also say that this kind of treatment is in concordance with the utilitarian perspective because due to the excessive "use" of a person's qualifications, the company, which is the total amount of the entire workforce, gains profit. So, if one or two people suffer from burnout, from the utilitarian perspective, this situation is not based on unethical grounds because happiness for more people is finally achieved (even if at the cost of a few peoples health).

Emotional intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is considered to be a basic aspect of present-day psychological research, and appears to be one of the most discussed issues in the current literature. There are claims that EI has important implications for success and adaptive outcomes in a multiple series of domains such as education, clinical intervention and the workplace. There has been many different approaches and there is a diverse consideration concerning three issues: EI's components, EI's main character (cognitive ability or personal trait) and EI's identification (a cross-cultural universal or related to specific cultural norms) (Zeidner, 2005).

Emotional Intelligence is defined as: "the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion and regulate emotion in the self and others". Or else, it is "the ability to recognize the meanings of emotions and their relationships, and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of them. It is involved in the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions and manage them" (Mayer et al., 2000). This approach is further explained by Cherniss (2000) as "a form of soci-

al intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action".

As we have seen so far, emotional intelligence is strongly related to a person's emotions. But what is an emotion? According to Antoniou (2005), "emotions constitute the highest form of the sensory relationship between humans and the objects and facts of reality. This relationship is characterized by relative stability, generality and correlations between needs and values which have been developed throughout an individual's personal development". He also mentions that "every aspect of human activity is accompanied by a variety of emotions. The importance of emotional management has led to the designation and study of emotional intelligence and its abilities". Emotional Intelligence, basically refers to a person's dual ability: a) to know when and how to express his emotions and b) being able to control them.

An important question is which quotient is more related to job performance: IQ or EQ (EI)? IQ by itself has little relation to job performance and success and it cannot be proved to be a good predictor of organizational performance. On the contrary, more importantly is the way in which the person is able to handle frustration, control his emotions and get along with other people. According to a research study of 80 Ph.Ds in Berkeley in the 1950s who had passed a series of IQ tests as candidates, forty years later and while these people were in their seventies, it was shown that their IQ test results were not related to their success at work. On the contrary, it was found that their emotional and social skills were four times more important in determining their professional success.

However, it is absurd to claim that cognitive ability is irrelevant to success in science, since a person needs to have a relatively high level of such ability in order to be admitted to a graduate science program at Berkeley or to get a job afterwards. But in the future, after the Ph.D and after being hired by a company, the ability of getting along with other colleagues and subordinates is considered to be of critical importance. According to Cherniss (2000) and Antoniou (2005), cognitive and non-cognitive abilities are very much related since emotional and social skills help improve cognitive functioning.

Emotional Intelligence plays an important role in successful work. This view is proved by certain factors. First, there is Martin Seligman's construct of "learned optimism" which is defined by the causal attributions that people make when confronted with failure or setbacks. According to the research, people who are optimists tend to make specific, temporary and external causal attributions. On the contrary,

pessimists tend to make global, permanent and internal attributions. In a study at MetLife, Seligman found that new salesmen who were optimists sold 37% more insurance in their first two years than pessimists did.

Second, emotional intelligence is connected to the ability of a person to manage his feelings and therefore, to handle stress. On those grounds, the individual is led to success. Third, emotional intelligence offers the person the ability to know when and how to express his feelings, as it does with controlling them. Fourth, there is a specific characteristic of EI: empathy which contributes to occupational success. According to research conducted by Rosenthal and colleagues, it was found that people who were best at "identifying" people's emotions, were more successful in their work as well as in their social lives (Antoniou, 2005; Cherniss, 2000).

There are three major theories concerning EI: Bar-On's Model, Mayer & Salovey's Theory and Goleman's Theory. Bar-On currently defines his model in terms of an array of traits and abilities related to emotional and social knowledge that influence our overall ability to effectively cope with environmental demands. This model includes a) the ability to be aware of, understand and express oneself, b) the ability to be aware of, understand and relate to others, c) the ability to deal with strong emotions and control one's impulses and d) the ability to adapt to change and to resolve problems of a personal or social nature. This model, contains five main aspects: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management and general mood skills (Bar-On, 2006; Emmerling & Goleman, 2003).

According to Mayer & Salovey's Theory, EI is the ability to perceive emotions and emotional knowledge and to reflectively regulate emotions in order to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003). This theory includes four main aspects:

1. *Perception, appraisal and expression of emotions* which is the individual's ability to identify and express emotions.
2. *Emotion's facilitation of thinking* which is the individual's ability to recognize different emotions and differentiate between them.
3. *Understanding and analyzing emotions; employing emotional knowledge* which is the individual's understanding of emotions and the ability to use them.
4. *Reflective regulation of emotions to promote emotional and intellectual work* which involves the individual's ability to elaborate on effective strategies in order to achieve the objectives (Antoniou, 2005).

Goleman's Theory is divided in two main axes: Personal Competences and Social Competences. Personal Competences include characteristics such as: self-awareness (emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence), self-regulation

(self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, innovativeness) and self-motivation (achievement drive, commitment, initiative, optimism). Social Competence includes: social awareness (empathy, service orientation, developing others, leveraging diversity, political awareness) and social skills (influence, communication, leadership, change catalyst, conflict management, building bonds, collaboration and cooperation, team capabilities) (Antoniou, 2005; Emmerling, 2004).

In the context of the present chapter, we are going to emphasize on only a few aspects of Goleman's Theory. Concerning personal competences, we are going to refer to "trustworthiness" since it includes standards of honesty and integrity. Namely, we are referring to: ethical actions that are above reproach, trust built through a person's reliability and authenticity, admittance of personal mistakes and confronting unethical actions by others and finally, taking tough, principled stands, even if they are unpopular.

The ethical nuance of emotional intelligence is considered to be very important in the present complex situation and condition of large and competitive companies who are looking for the highest possible profit at the less possible cost. Emmerling & Goleman (2003), take this particular ethical aspect and ask if there could be an emotionally intelligent "terrorist". This question raises the issue of how morals and values are related to EI. That is, "is EI morally neutral or does it interact with an ethical dimension?". Howard Gardner says that "no intelligence is moral or immoral in itself".

According to Emmerling and Goleman (2003), there are certain aspects of EI which tend to promote prosocial behavior, that is, self-awareness must be deployed to act in accordance with one's own sense of purpose, meaning and ethics. Empathy appears to be an essential step in fostering altruism and compassion. So, the arising question has to do with the extent to which cultivating such abilities foster a positive ethical outlook. There are Macchiavellian personalities who use their EI abilities in order to manipulate people, but according to research those people tend to show diminished empathy abilities and they usually focus only on their self-interests.

Concerning social competences, there is the matter of communication and conflict that we have covered earlier in this chapter. Emotional Intelligence, on communication, involves sending clear and convincing messages. So, the person is effective in a give-and-take process, he deals with difficult issues straight forwardly, listens well, seeks mutual understanding, fosters open communication and stays receptive to bad news as well as good. Emotional Intelligence also contributes to conflict management by negotiating and resolving disagreements. The person can handle difficult people and tense situations with diplomacy and tact. He can also spot

potential conflict and bring disagreements into the open and help to deescalate them. Finally, he encourages debate and open discussion (Emmerling, 2004).

Conclusion

In the context of the present chapter we have analyzed the issues that related to communication processes and networks within a firm. There are two possibilities with regard to this issue: there may be effective communications between workers, but also, there can be defective communications that can lead to the development of conflict and stressful feelings among co-workers.

Conflict can be either functional and creative or dysfunctional and troublesome. In case of conflict, people can develop aggressive, compromise or withdrawal mechanisms of defense in order to avoid the negative impact of the disagreement. Stress is an emotion that can be caused by defective communication and conflict between people within the context of a firm. It has negative consequences for a person's physical and psychological well-being and it can be managed by the existence and development of Emotional Intelligence.

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