

CHAPTER 5

5 ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The corporate organisation is the environment in which employees function. There are certain factors which are true to the corporate environment which cause or contribute to stress in the lives of employees. It is necessary to be aware of these factors because they can have an effect on the functioning of employees.

Organisations have existed since the beginning of time. People have joined forces to accomplish their goals in families, tribes, political units and gangs (Gibson, Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1994:725). During the 1950's and 1960's, organisational behaviour became a field of research. The study of organisational behaviour emerged from different streams of thinking and writing. Tosi, Rizzo and Carroll (1994:9) explain it as follows:

Psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and other scientists studied worker and management problems from a behavioural perspective before 1960, and managers were concerned with human problems before then.

The purpose of this field of research (organisational behaviour) is to enhance the understanding of the people within the organisation towards one another, and this may lead to improved productivity, customer satisfaction and improved general management within the organisation (Gibson, *et al.*, 1994:6).

There are many factors within the organisation which could cause stress in the lives of employees. Many companies see their employees as their competitive advantage and this places a high demand on the employees. According to Buzan in Bloisi (2003:121),

Stress is one of the main damaging effects to any company and its bottom line. When people are stressed, a business disintegrates by definition.

There are many different aspects within the work situation that can cause stress among the employees. Some of these stressors are role interaction, over and under stimulation, decision making, organisational processes and individual attributes (Fincham & Rhodes, 1999:43-52). Stress may lead to less productive individuals, more absenteeism and stress related illnesses. Corporate employees form an essential part of the success of an organisation and if stress is inhibiting their functioning, it could have a detrimental effect on the organisation. The organisation expects employees to perform and adapt to the changing environment within the organisation and this causes stress in the life of the employees and has an effect on productivity, at a cost to the organisation.

There are many different factors that employees have to contend with in the organisational environment such as change within the organisation, expectation of growth, globalisation, diversity within the workforce and technological changes (Tosi, *et al.*, 1994:4-7). These are some of the aspects which could cause stress for employees within the organisation. Employees have the capacity to adapt and change, but there are risks involved when this is expected constantly. According to Fincham and Rhodes (1999:40), ongoing stress experienced by employees in the work place may have a negative effect on their health and general functioning. They explain it as follows:

...the person, who constantly struggles to master a turbulent environment or a demanding task, faces an increased risk of peptic ulcers, mental illness, hypertension and coronary heart disease.

These are all stress related illnesses that may be experienced by corporate employees within the changing organisational environment. The researcher would like to draw the reader's attention to the model in figure 5.1 that shows how the corporate employee's homeostasis could be affected by the stressors within the organisational environment:

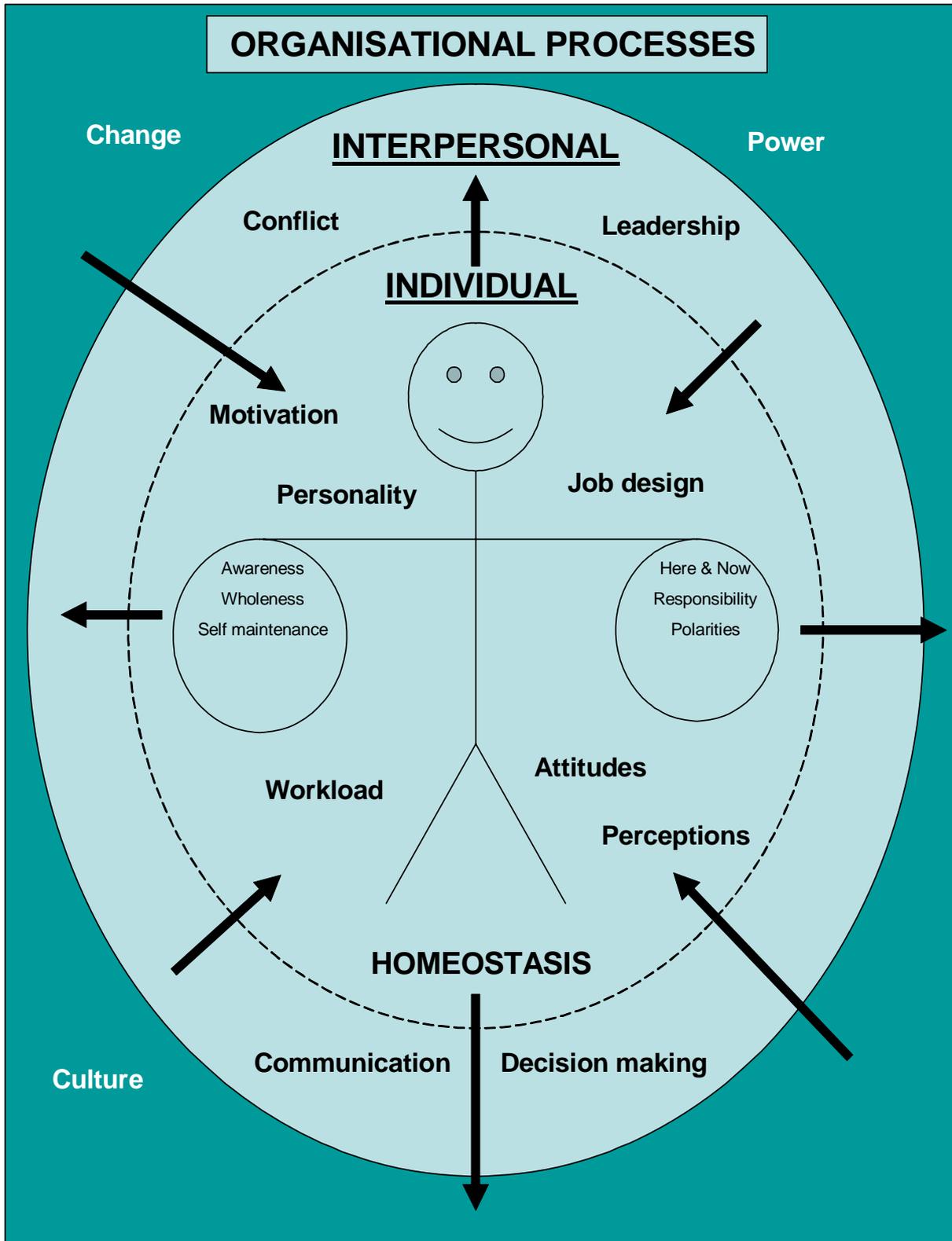


Figure 5.1 The Employee in the Organisation

Employees have individual factors such as personality, perception, attitudes and motivation that can have an effect on how they behave within the organisation. These factors also have an effect on their ability to cope with stressors in their lives. These employees do not stand on their own but they stand in relation to other employees within the working environment. At times there could be barriers in communication with others or there is conflict between employees. These factors could be experienced by the employees as stressful and they have to learn how to cope with these inevitable occurrences. Furthermore, employees are functioning within the larger environment of the organisation and within this environment there are processes (such as change) that occur on an ongoing basis. Employees have to make adjustments to ensure that they can function optimally within the organisational environment.

Organisational behaviour is important for this study because it enlightens the reader with regard to employee behaviour within their working environment. It places the study within the organisational context. This is the environment in which employees may experience stress and this is also the environment in which their stress needs to be addressed.

This chapter focuses on defining organisational behaviour, the individual within the organisation, interpersonal behaviour within the organisation and organisational processes.

5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

5.2.1 What is an Organisation?

According to Buchanan and Huczynski in Campbell (1997:3), organisations can be defined as follows:

Organisations are social arrangements for the controlled performance of collective goals.

Furthermore, Campbell (1997:3) explains that the following characteristics describe organisations effectively:

- ***They all contain people.***
- ***The people in the organisation perform a role and their continued membership of the organisation is dependent upon such a performance.***
- ***The organisation has a collective goal to which all members subscribe.***
- ***All the roles together, help the organisation achieve its collective goal.***
- ***The roles are divided so that members of the organisation perform different tasks according to their expertise, interest or specialism.***
- ***There is clearly defined hierarchy of authority so that each member of the organisation is aware of where he/she “fits in”.***
- ***The limits or borders of an organisation are usually clearly defined,***

and thus there is usually no doubt whether a particular person is “inside” or “outside” of the organisation.

5.2.2 Defining Organisational Behaviour

There are many different definitions for organisational behaviour. According to Senior (1997:4), an organisation is a group of people working together to achieve the same goal Organisational behaviour is defined by Daft and Noe (2001:4) as follows:

The actions and interactions of individuals and groups in organisations.

All the employees in the organisation contribute to the accomplishing of the goals of the organisation. The employees within the organisation interact with one another and have an influence on the behaviour of others. Furthermore, behaviour may be advanced or inhibited by the values, structure, policies and goals of the organisation. All of these factors form part of organisational behaviour (Daft & Noe, 2001:4).

Gibson, *et al* (2000:5) describe organisational behaviour as follows:

...the field of study that draws on theory, methods and principles from various disciplines to learn about individual perceptions, values, learning capacities and actions while working in groups and within the total organisation; analysing the external environment’s effect on the organisation and it’s human resources, missions, objectives and strategies.

Human behaviour influences the effectiveness of the organisation. Organisations are

made up of people and each person is unique. To be effective, the organisation must see each person as unique and different and embrace that diversity to contribute to the success of the organisation (Gibson, *et al* 2000:5). Individual performance can be seen as the basis of organisational performance and to be able to manage processes within the organisation effectively, it is important to understand the individual within the organisation.

5.3 BEHAVIOUR WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

The employee's behaviour within the organisation is influenced by certain variables that should be taken into consideration when observing at the person holistically. The individual behaviour framework shows how the environment influences the individual, which influences the behaviour of the person and the outcomes of his/her performance and interaction (Gibson, *et al*, 2000:92).

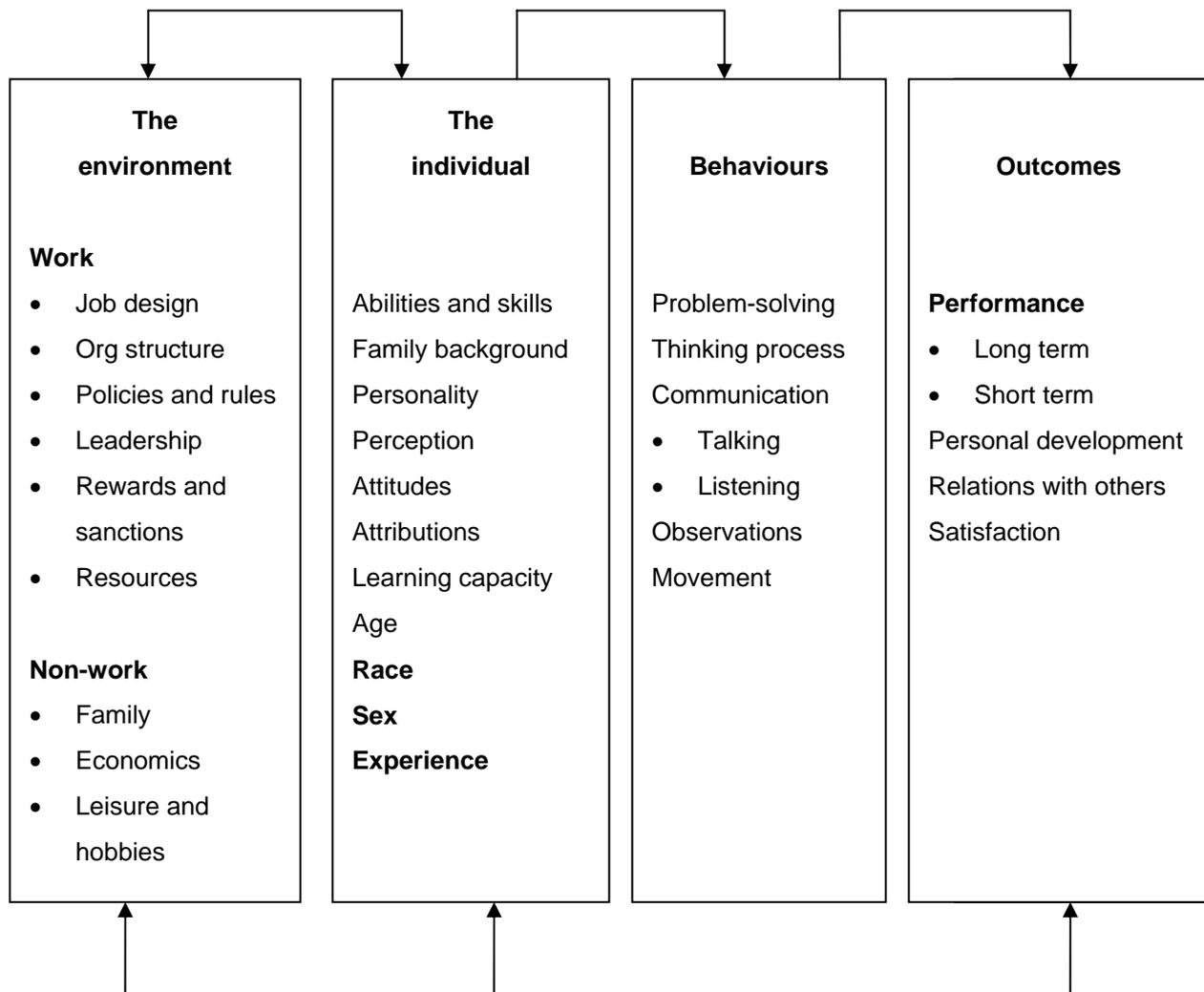


Table 5.1 Individual Behaviour Framework (Gibson, et al, 2000:92).

Table 5.1 shows that the environment and the individual (employee) influence each other to a great extent, and in turn, that has an effect on the productivity, personal development, relationships and satisfaction experienced by employees. The behaviour of employees has consequences and the results of their actions serve as feedback to other employees and the organisation (Gibson, et al., 2000:92).

Employees are expected to perform a certain job and for them to be able to perform well, they need to have the skills for the job. The organisation has the responsibility to train and educate employees within the working environment (Gibson, et al.,2000:93). A lack of

skills was identified as one of the causal factors for stress by Karasek (Schaap, 2002:3.17). The demands that are made on employees in correlation to their skills create stress in the lives of employees (Schaap, 2002:3.17). When trying to understand organisational behaviour, it is important to take the following three aspects into consideration: individual behaviour in the organisation, interpersonal behaviour in the organisation and organisational processes (Senior, 1997:4).

5.4 INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR

The organisation is made up of many different employees. Employees have unique characteristics that influence their behaviour within the organisation. These characteristics often play a role in the ability of corporate employees to manage the effects of stress on their lives. Some of the characteristics that have an effect on individual behaviour include personality, attitudes, perception and motivation.

5.4.1 Personality

Personality is reflected in the manner in which a person acts and interacts in different situations. Daft and Marcic (2001:361) define personality as follows:

The set of characteristics supporting a relatively stable pattern of behaviour in response to ideas, objects, or people in the environment.

Therefore, it is behaviour from a certain employee that occurs consistently and repetitively in different circumstances.

According to Gibson, *et al* (1994:124), personality can be described as follows:

- ***A stable set of characteristics and tendencies that determine commonalities and differences in people's behaviour.***
- ***Personality is an organised whole; otherwise the individual would have no meaning.***
- ***Personality appears to be organised into patterns that are to some degree observable and measurable.***
- ***Although personality has a biological basis, its specific development is also a product of social and cultural environments.***
- ***Personality has superficial aspects (such as attitude towards being a team leader) and a deeper core (such as sentiments about authority).***
- ***Personality involves both common and unique characteristics. Each person is different from every other person in some respects, while being similar to persons in other respects.***

Behaviour is usually personality and situation driven, but personality is usually consistent. Personality will determine the way employees behave, as well as the type of situations that employees will get involved in. For example, shy employees, would rather avoid a situation where they are the centre of attraction (Tosi *et al.*, 1994:115). This could lead to stress in the lives of employees that have to perform tasks (such as presentations) in front of large groups of people, if they are not comfortable with talking in front of people. A job usually has a set of expectations and it is likely that employees will be placed in a situation where they have to perform a task as part of their job-description with which they are not comfortable. This may lead to stress in the lives of employees.

Furthermore, there are certain personality types that can be linked to stress related

behaviour. Type A and Type B personality types have been identified and they react to stress differently because of characteristics in their personalities (See par 3.6.1).

5.4.2 Personality Traits

Personality traits are the “parts” that make up the personality. They are usually relatively stable characteristics that people refer to as another person’s personality. For example: A has an aggressive personality or B has a kind personality. These attributes differ from person to person and often play a role in the manner in which stress affects the lives of employees.

According to Daft and Marcic (2001:361), research has identified five main personality traits (called the Big Five) which incorporate many other traits. These five traits are extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness to experience and are described as follows:

- ***Extroversion***

The degree to which a person is sociable, talkative, assertive and comfortable with interpersonal relationships.

- ***Agreeableness***

The degree to which a person is able to get along with others by being good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, understanding, and trusting.

- ***Conscientiousness***

The degree to which a person is focused on a few goals, thus behaving in ways that are responsible, dependable, persistent and achievement oriented.

- ***Emotional stability***

The degree to which a person is calm, enthusiastic and secure, rather than tense, nervous, depressed, moody, or insecure.

- ***Openness to experience***

The degree to which a person has a broad range of interests and is imaginative, creative, artistically sensitive, and willing to consider new ideas (Daft and Marcic, 2001:361).

Some of the other personality traits which are emphasised in the literature will be discussed in brief.

- **Locus of control**

Employees can have an internal or an external locus of control. If employees believe that they can influence events that take place in their lives, they tend to have an internal locus of control. If employees believe that everything that takes place in their lives is beyond their control, they have an external locus of control (Fincham & Rhodes, 1999:80).

Employees who have an internal locus of control are less likely to conform to pressure and do not change their attitudes easily. Employees with an external locus of control enjoy structured jobs more than unstructured jobs. They prefer participation in job-related decision-making than non-participation. Each employee's locus of control may vary according to the situation and past experiences (Gibson *et al.*, 2000:113).

Locus of control may relate to introjects that the employees have and that has

an influence on their way of approaching the tasks that they have to do within the working environment.

Practical Example:

Employees may have experienced a very strict upbringing, where they were not allowed to make any decisions before they had permission from their parents. They started to believe that they cannot do anything without the involvement of an authority figure. As adults and employees, they may feel that they cannot do anything without an authority figure's approval and after the job is done they want recognition before they are prepared to take another risk. This could inhibit creativity and their productivity could be affected because of it.

- **Self efficacy**

Self efficacy is another personality trait that may play a role in the ability of employees to manage stress. According to Gibson *et.al.*, (2000:114), self efficacy can be defined as follows:

Self efficacy is the belief that one can perform adequately in a situation.

Employees usually evaluate their ability according to past accomplishments, performance of others and emotional states. This has an influence on the perception, motivation and performance of employees (Gibson, *et al.*, 2000:114-115). Drummond (2000:65) is of the opinion that self efficacy can motivate a

person.

Self-efficacy theories of motivation predict that: performance depends upon self-belief.

Self-esteem of employees lies close to their self-efficacy. If they have low self-esteem, they do not think highly of themselves and they may doubt their ability to do the task that they have been asked to do.

- **Authoritarian Personality**

This personality trait is based upon prejudice and is usually very judgemental. Employees with authoritarian personalities are usually experienced as punitive and rigid and others usually feel that they are trying to demean or control them. These employees usually believe that the strong should lead and the weak should follow (Tosi, *et al.*, 1994:119).

Employees with authoritarian personality traits often cause stress in the lives of other employees. They are usually not very flexible and they want to assert themselves in every situation and often it is to the detriment of the employees working together with them.

- **Bureaucratic Personality**

According to Gordon in Tosi, *et al.* (1994:119) the beliefs and values of employees could dispose them toward a preference for rules and regulations. Those with a strong bureaucratic personality identify well with the organisation

and often adapt well to military organisations.

- **Machiavellianism**

Machiavellianism is named after Machiavelli (who wrote “the Prince” in the 16th century) and this attribute refers to employees who manipulate others for personal gain. They have a rational and pragmatic approach to work situations and usually create emotional distance between themselves and their subordinates (Bloisi, 2003:156).

This could lead to the employees feeling de-personalised, as if they are objects that are being used for the personal gain of another individual. If corporate employees start to realise that they are being manipulated, it could create uncertainty and misplaced loyalty which could have a negative effect on the employees’ work performance.

- **Dogmatism**

Employees high in dogmatism often see the world as threatening and they are often rigid and closed in their way of thinking. They cling to their own beliefs and are not prepared to consider another person’s point of view (Bloisi, 2003:156).

This personality trait may make it difficult for corporate employees to cope within the changing environment of the organisation. If they have to make adjustments to their way of thinking on a frequent basis, it could become very stressful.

- **Self esteem**

Self esteem is the way in which people regard their own value or worth. Bloisi (2003:157) explains how self esteem in the working environment can have an effect on the employee's functioning:

People with high self-esteem tend to like themselves, have high expectations for success, and feel confident they can achieve their goals. Those with low self-esteem lack confidence and look to others for praise and re-enforcement. In doing so they tend to avoid conflict and conform to expected norms.

When people with low self esteem do find themselves in confronting situations, they usually experience these situations as very traumatic and upsetting.

Confrontations in the workplace are unavoidable. It could be very stressful for employees with low self-esteem when they are involved in confrontations. If the employees are upset by a confrontation it could have an effect on the employees' performance.

- **Self monitoring**

Self monitoring means that these individuals are sensitive to the situation and adapt and make changes to meet the expectations and needs that occur. These corporate employees change their personalities to satisfy the audience. Furthermore, they are usually more flexible in working with different types of people (Bloisi, 2004:157).

- **Hardiness**

Commitment, control and challenge form a part of hardiness. Hardiness influences a person's perception of a stressful event. Hardy people live every day to experience every moment, they believe that they can control their experiences and they view change as normal and see this as a challenge rather than an obstacle (Auerbach & Gramling, 1998:41; Brehm, 1998:74). Furthermore, they have ***a sense of commitment to themselves, their work, families and other important values*** (Brehm, 1998:74).

The above mentioned personality traits all have an influence on the employees' abilities to cope with stress. Certain personality factors have an effect on the employees' ability to cope with stressors in the working environment. Therefore, some employees experience some situations as stressful and others employees do not experience the same situation as stressful.

5.5 ATTITUDES

The employees' attitudes are portrayed in the positive or negative way in which they approach a challenge. Employees can be enthusiastic to tackle a problem or they can complain about what needs to be done. These are ways in which employees portray their attitude. Attitude is defined by Daft and Noe (2001:110) as follows:

An evaluation that predisposes a person to act in a certain way and includes a cognitive, affective and behavioural component.

5.5.1 Attitude Components

As mentioned in the definition, attitudes are considered to have three components. The cognitive component which includes the beliefs, opinions and information employees have about the object of the attitude, the affective component which includes employees' emotions or feelings about the object of the attitude and the behavioural component, which includes employees' intentions to behave towards the object of the attitude in a specific way (Daft & Marcic, 2001:357).

5.5.2 Job Satisfaction

The attitude of employees towards their jobs and the organisation they are working for may influence productivity and job satisfaction. There is a negative correlation between job satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover (Bloisi, 2003:151). Job satisfaction is described as a positive attitude towards the job. Job satisfaction is linked to the amount of control employees have over their work. This is not always easy to establish but usually employees who have job satisfaction feel positive about their work and other employees find it enjoyable to work with them (Daft & Marcic, 2001:358).

5.6 PERCEPTION

Perception has an impact on the job satisfaction of employees and their ability to manage stress within the working environment. Bloisi (2003:126) defines perception as follows:

Perception is the selection, organisation and interpretation of sensory data. The critically important process helps people define their world and provide clues for guiding their behaviour.

Perception has to do with the sensory awareness of the employees. The sensory awareness leads to self awareness and awareness of the employees' surroundings.

Practical example:

If the employees' perception is that they may be retrenched (they feel threatened and uncertain), it may cause their Gestalt to move out of balance and these employees will not experience equilibrium. This could have a negative effect on their performance and on their stress levels because they can not stop thinking about the possibility of losing their jobs.

Perception defines what an employee sees as reality. Employees believe that what they see is real and this influences their behaviour. Employees give their own meaning to the stimuli perceived, so the way the situation is seen is often more important than the situation itself.

Perception has a direct impact on the stress that employees experience because stress is often the result of the balance of the perceived stressor or demand and the perceived ability to cope with that demand. According to Looker and Gregson (2003:25), the perception of the individual leads to the stress response:

... a mismatch between perceived demands and the perceived ability to cope. It is the balance between how we view demands and how we think

we can cope with those demands that determines whether we feel no stress, distressed or eustressed.

5.7 DECISION MAKING

The problem-solving and decision-making processes often go hand in hand. This process can cause a great amount of stress for the employees because most decisions have positive and negative outcomes and the employees' have to decide whether the positive outcomes will outweigh the negative outcomes.

Bloisi (2003:478) defines problem-solving and decision-making respectively, as follows:

Problem-solving is the process of eliminating the discrepancy between actual and desired outcomes. Decision-making is selecting the best solution from among feasible alternatives.

According to Daft and Noe (2001:337), problem-solving is incorporated into and forms part of the decision-making process.

Decision-making is the process of identifying problems and opportunities, then resolving them.

Figure 5.2 illustrates the decision-making process and is explained as follows:

- 1. The decision maker establishes the scope of the decision situation (problem or opportunity) and the goal of the decision.***
- 2. The decision maker gathers information about the alternative***

solutions, including their costs and probable outcomes.

3. *The decision maker establishes criteria for selecting an alternative, weighting the importance of each criterion.*
4. *The decision maker compares the alternatives in terms of the criteria to be used and selects the one that is optimal.*
5. *The decision maker implements the decision and evaluates the results, gaining knowledge to apply to future decisions.*

The goal of this model is to reach the best possible decision and solution for the problem.

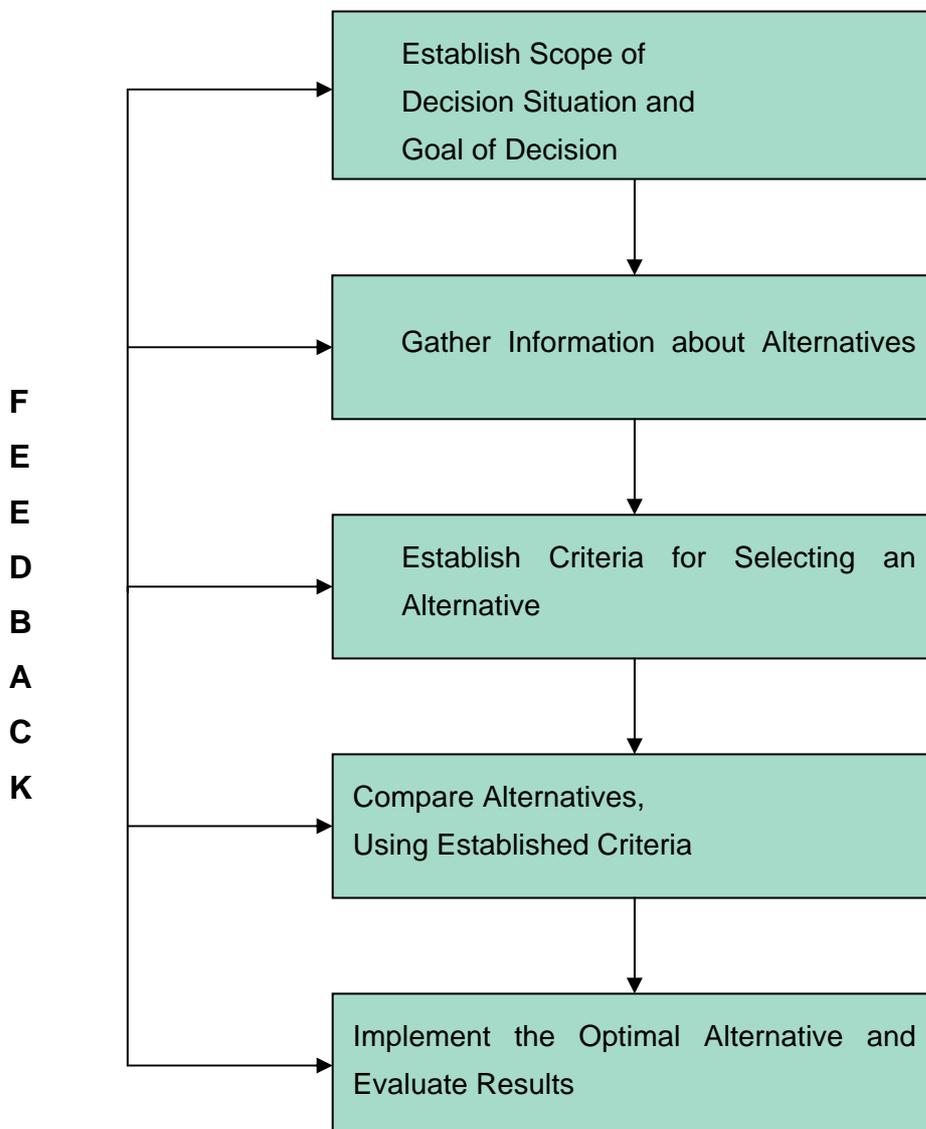


Figure 5.2 The Rational Model of Decision Making (Daft and Noe, 2001:337).

The use of a structured process when making decisions may alleviate the stress that the employees are experiencing. A model (such as above) will enable employees to gain perspective and look at all the alternatives that can be utilised in decision-making and problem-solving.

5.8 MOTIVATION

Corporate employees have to be motivated to continue working within the organisational environment. Different people have different sources of motivation. According to Drummond (2000:62), the word motivation comes from the Latin word *mouvoir* which means to *move*, and when studying motivation it is important to ascertain what makes people “move”.

Motivation is one of the most important aspects within an organisation because it is the reason for employees to do their work and to do it in the most productive way. Motivation is defined by Daft and Marcic (2001:410) as follows:

Motivation refers to the internal and external forces that arouse enthusiasm, desire, purpose and persistence to pursue a certain course of action.

Motivation is an essential characteristic, because positively motivated employees strive to find the best way to perform their jobs. Motivated employees are interested in rendering high quality service and are more likely to be productive than non-motivated employees. The motivated employees usually want to come to work and do their share (Gibson, *et al.*, 1994:145).

5.8.1 Why do people work?

What is the motivation for working? What energises employees to get up and go to work? What are the motivational triggers that drive employees to be productive? These are the questions that can be asked when looking at the driving force behind working. There are certain motivational factors that have been identified and will be discussed according to Maslow's needs hierarchy, McClelland's learned needs theory and Herzberg's two-factor theory.

- **Maslow's Needs Hierarchy**

Maslow suggested that the five basic needs of a human being form a hierarchy. The five needs are basic physiological needs, the need for safety and security, the need for social acceptance, self esteem needs, and actualization needs. These needs are split into a higher and lower order needs as indicated in figure 5.3.

The lower order needs are classified as priority. For example, if people are hungry the thought of food preoccupies their thinking but as soon as they have received food their thoughts move to a higher level need and they will start thinking about their safety. Maslow is of the opinion that people are motivated by unsatisfied needs and every need should be fulfilled to a great extent before the person can move up the hierarchy to the next need (Linstead, Fulop & Lilley, 2004:284).

Maslow's lower order needs correlate with factors such as working conditions, supervision, relations with co-workers, salary, company policy and administration, whereas the factors corresponding to Maslow's higher order needs would be the work itself, responsibility, recognition for work, advancement and achievement (Adler, 1997:162).

Within the organisation corporate employees could experience a lack of motivation because their lower order needs are not met.

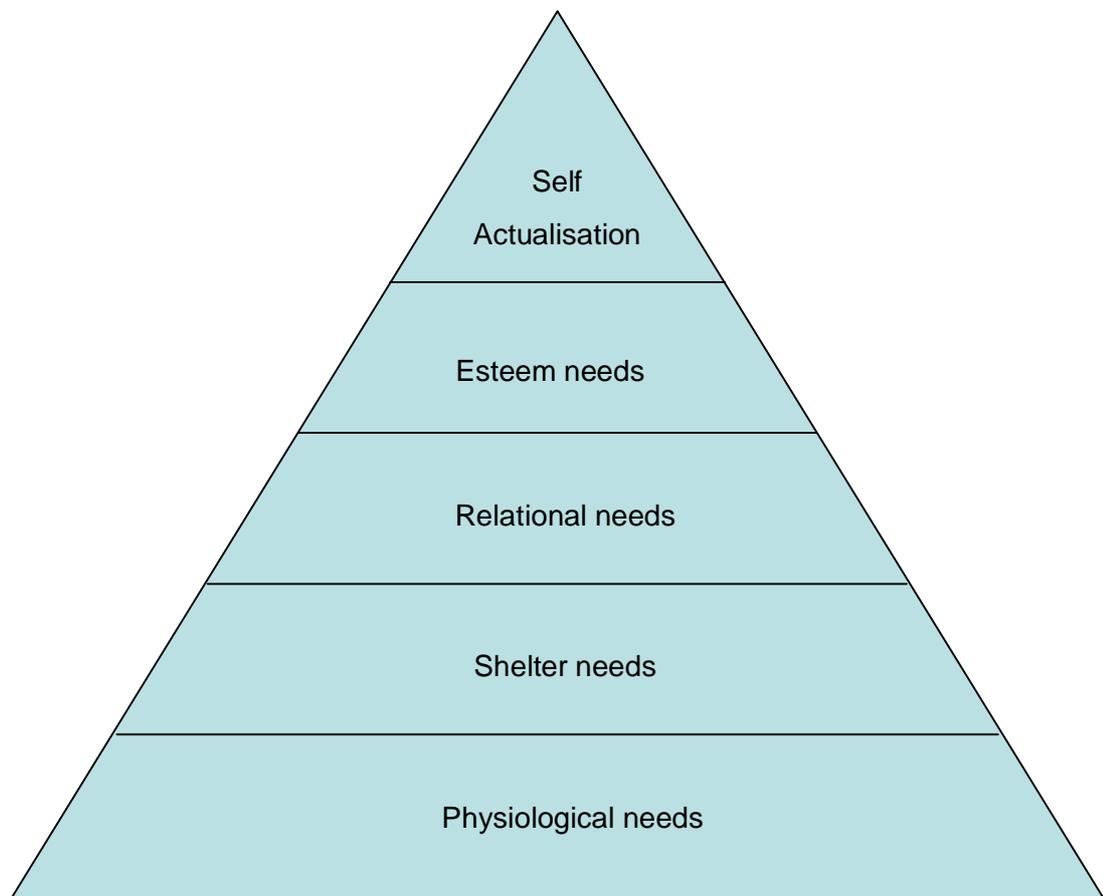


Figure 5.3 Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs (Campbell, 1997:193)

Practical example:

If the employees are concerned about pay-cuts and retrenchments, they will lack motivation to focus on the higher order needs such as the need to take responsibility for their work and to be productive. The employees need to know that their lower order needs (salaries and job security) are being taken care of before they can focus on the higher order needs such as job performance.

- **Herzberg's Two Factor Theory:**

Herzberg's two factor theory is essentially concerned with work motivation (Drummond, 2000:64). According to Herzberg, there is a set of external (extrinsic) and a set of internal (intrinsic) factors. The extrinsic factors include salary, job security, working conditions and status. The intrinsic factors include achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement, the work itself and the possibility of growth. When the intrinsic factors are present they build strong levels of motivation, which result in higher productivity (Gibson, *et.al.*, 2000: 134).

The satisfaction of employees lies in two assumptions about people, which are **the need to avoid pain and the need to grow**. A good environment or work context prevents dissatisfaction and enables growth towards self actualisation. Herzberg proposed that job enrichment will increase the motivation of the employees regarding their jobs. Job enrichment would increase the autonomy and the responsibility of the employees (Linstead, *et al*, 2004:285).

Therefore, within the corporate environment, employees will be less motivated if their environment and working conditions are not favourable. They will be more motivated if there is room for growth and advancement within the organisation.

Employees are often prepared to endure one of the factors, if the other factor is in place.

Practical example:

If the employees do not have the greatest working environment (confined space in an old building) but there is opportunity for growth within the organisation, the employees may be prepared to endure their circumstances. The other alternative is also possible, where the working conditions of the employees are excellent, but there is not much room for growth. In this case the employees could decide that the job is still worth it, and stay motivated, because the benefits of the working conditions fulfil their current needs.

- **McClelland's Three Motives**

McClelland identified three motives that drive people which are the need for **achievement, power and affiliation** (Adler, 1997:160). McClelland did not agree with the view that a person has an hierarchy of needs. He was of the opinion that needs varied based on the importance that individuals attached to it.

- **Need for achievement**

The corporate employees with a high need to achieve will react positively to challenges, while those with a lower need to achieve will look for less challenging and stimulating positions. People who do not have a need to achieve will avoid failure and risk taking (Linstead, *et al.*, 2004:287).

- **Need for Power**

According to Linstead, *et al.*, (2004:286) effective managers have a higher need for power than affiliation. It is less important for them to be liked than to exercise power.

- **Need for Affiliation**

McClelland is of the opinion that affiliation is less important within the working environment than the need for power. The need for affiliation is generally not associated with successful corporate employees.

Therefore, all the factors mentioned above could have an effect on the motivation of employees. If employees are not motivated, it may be possible that there is some aspect of the working environment which could be contributing to their general dissatisfaction. If employees are not motivated, their productivity may become lower and because their full concentration is not with the work, it could lead to more mistakes in their work. These factors could have an effect on the stress levels of the employees.

5.9 INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOUR

There are many aspects related to interpersonal behaviour that can cause stress or relieve stress in the life of the corporate employee. Some of these aspects are communication, conflict and leadership.

5.9.1 Communication

An organisation can have a culture of good communication. This means that communication within the organisation is important to that organisation. The organisation encourages new employees to participate, information is disseminated through regular meeting and there are opportunities for the employees to make suggestions regarding the organisational functioning (Tosi, *et.al.*, 1994:367).

According to Bloisi (2003:308), communication is of utmost importance within the organisational environment. E says the following regarding communication:

Communication is a crucial aspect of any situation where two or more people interact to accomplish an objective.

5.9.2 Defining Communication

Communication is defined by Bloisi (2003:308) as follows:

Communication begins when one person sends a message to another with the intent of evoking a response. Effective communication occurs when the receiver interprets the message exactly as the sender intended.

Efficient communication uses less time and fewer resources.

The communication process is shown visually in figure 5.4.

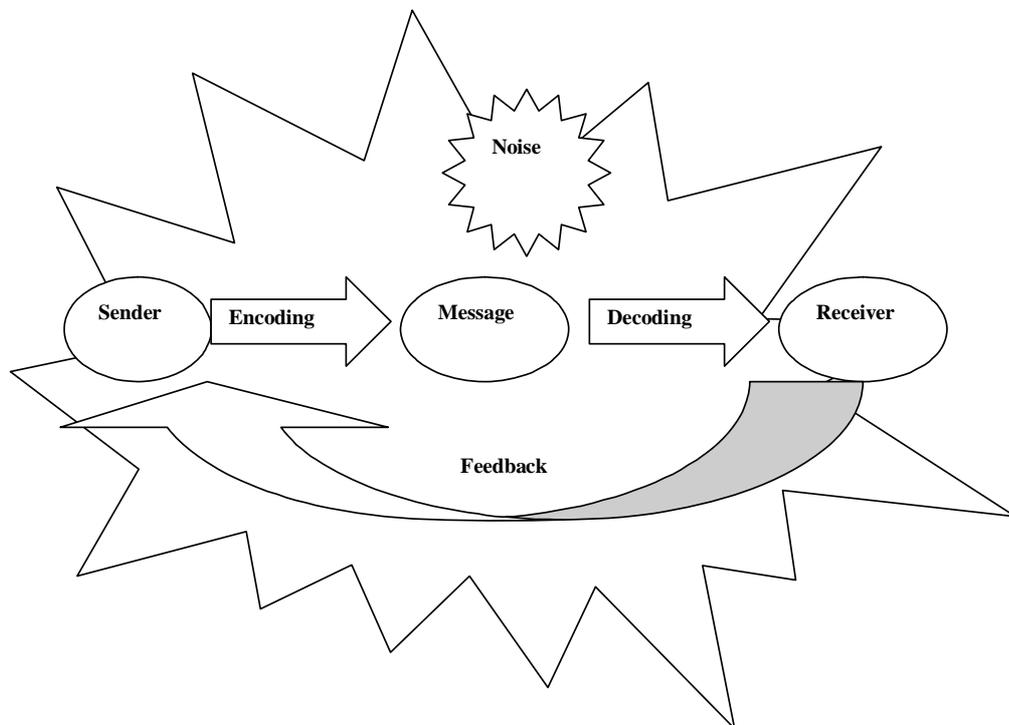


Figure 5.4 The Communication Process (Daft & Noe, 2001:306)

The first component in the communication process is the **sender** who **encodes** (selecting words or symbols to form the message) an idea, request or emotion and represents the idea through a **message**. The communication process continues when someone **receives** and **decodes** (translating the symbols of a message to understand its meaning) the message. After that, the receiver may give **feedback** to the sender of the message (Compare Daft & Noe, 2001:306).

Communication is not always simple. There are inhibiting or facilitating factors that have an effect on the outcome of the communication. These factors are explained by Tosi, *et al.*, (1994:371) as follows:

There are a number of factors which inhibit or facilitate the effectiveness of communication. Some are individual characteristics of senders or receivers, such as emotional and perceptual limitations. Others include the forms of communication used, the characteristics of the organisation and the unique and episodic characteristics surrounding the communication interaction itself.

5.9.3 Formal Communication Channels

Within the organisation there are formal communication channels that have been created to ensure that the tasks that need to be done are accomplished. These channels of communication flow in different directions, namely upward communication, downward communication and horizontal communication.

- **Downward communication**

Communication takes place from those individuals in the higher levels of the hierarchy towards those employees on the lower levels. This communication can take the form of job instructions, official memos, policy statements, procedures and manuals (Gibson, *et al.*, 2000:404).

The problem with downward communication is that it is often inadequate and inaccurate. The corporate employees often feel that they are not informed enough and that they do not know what is going on in the organisation (Gibson, *et al.*, 1994:581).

The employees have to rely on their supervisors and managers to convey information downward. The managers often use language that is used by head office staff and the employees do not understand the content of the information (Bloisi, 2003:315).

This can cause uncertainty in the lives of the employees. They do not understand the information that has been given to them and they cannot be as committed to the objective because they do not understand the reasons for the decision.

- **Upward communication**

Upward communication means that the employees have to communicate with their superiors in some way or another. This type of communication provides the managers with information regarding the functioning or progress of a certain task. Employees can also give suggestions through to top management by making use of this process (Bloisi, 2003:315).

Effective upward communication is difficult in larger organisations. It is often experienced as the least effective form of communication as managers often do not respond to messages sent to them from lower level employees, especially if the message content is not what the manager would like it to be (Gibson, *et al.*, 2000:405).

Corporate employees do not feel as if they are a part of the organisation and they do not feel involved in the organisation if they do not get the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

- **Horizontal communication**

According to Daft (2000:580), horizontal communication can be defined as follows:

Horizontal communication is the lateral or diagonal exchange of messages among peers or co-workers... The purpose of horizontal communication is not only to inform but also to request support and co-ordinate activities.

Horizontal communication occurs when employees who are on the same level within the organisation communicate with each other to ensure that an objective is achieved. It could be the production manager and sales manager from the same organisation who need to communicate with each other to ensure that the activities that are done by the different departments, are co-ordinated.

Figure 5.5 highlights the formal communication channels within an organisation:

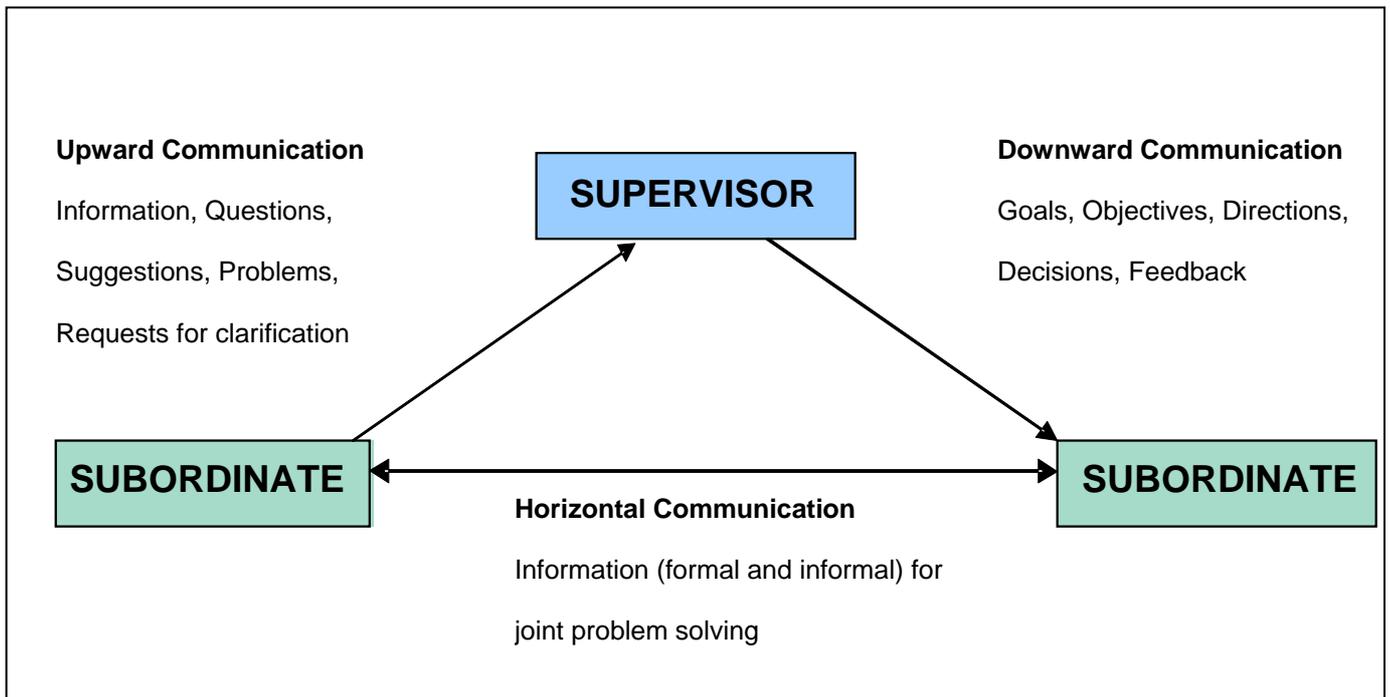


Figure 5.5 Directions of Communication within Organisations (Daft, 2000:581)

5.9.4 Barriers to Communication

Communication or the lack thereof can cause uncertainty in the life of corporate employees and this can contribute to higher stress levels.

Practical example:

If there is a lack of communication and employees suspect that retrenchments are going to take place and they are uncertain how the retrenchment will affect them, it could lead to anxiety and concern regarding their job security, finances and family security. If the stress levels of employees rise because of such factors, they cannot give their full attention to their work and this could lead to less productive employees.

There are certain barriers that contribute to the breakdown in communication within the organisation:

- **Frame of reference**

Communication is perceived differently by two individuals because of their *past experiences and their current expectations*. Employees interpret a message according to their frame of reference or their individual perceptions (Bloisi, 2003:318).

- **Semantics**

Semantics are the meaning and the use of words. Semantics become problematic when two people attribute different meanings to the same words. This often happens when people from different cultures are trying to communicate (Bloisi, 2003:319).

- **Value judgements**

Value judgements have an effect when the receiver evaluates the *worth* of the senders' message. When the receiver does not judge the sender's message as worthwhile to listen to, the sender realises this through a verbal or non-verbal message which he/she conveys to the sender (Bloisi, 2003:319). This could lead to misunderstandings and misconceptions.

- **Selective listening**

The receiver blocks out the part of the message that he/she does not want to hear. The receiver may block out the information or change the information according to pre-conceived ideas (Bloisi, 2003:319).

- **Filtering**

According to Bloisi (2003:320), filtering can be defined as follows:

Filtering is selective listening in reverse: in fact, we may call it “selective sending”.

The senders filter the message when they convey it to their colleagues. Only certain parts of the information are shared with the listeners.

Practical example:

When subordinates do not want their managers to know about the negative aspects of a project, they will not give all the information to the manager. Only the positive aspects of the project will be conveyed.

Filtering can cause stress in the lives of employees. If they need to hide information from their managers and colleagues and if the information is revealed, they will have to take responsibility for their actions.

- **Distrust**

If there is distrust with either the receiver or the sender, one or more of the communication barriers are likely to occur. Both parties will be wary of each other and the full message will not be communicated (Bloisi, 2003:320).

The barriers as discussed above prevent effective communication between employees. If the communication is not effective, it can contribute to the stress levels of the employees. Interpersonal conflict often goes hand in hand with ineffective communication.

5.10 INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

Conflict within the organisation is an important aspect of organisational behaviour. Conflict is inevitable, but not all conflict is harmful. According to Appleby (1994:167) conflict can be defined as follows:

... any personal divergence of interests between groups or individuals, conflict is behaviour intended to obstruct the achievement of goals of other persons.

5.10.1 What are the Causes of Conflict?

Conflict within organisations can be latent or it can manifest between employees expressing their different aims or aspirations. Personal factors may contribute to the conflict between individuals and the employees may experience tension within the organisation and this may lead to conflict. According to Linstead, *et al.* (2004:395),

some of the factors that cause tension are:

- *Scarcity of financial resources produces conflict over budgets.*
- *Differentiation of tasks and roles places people in win-lose situations.*
- *Hierarchical relations create conflicts around control and the reaction to control.*
- *Status differences create barriers to communication or feelings of inequity and resentment.*
- *Patterns of interdependence may make one group dependent on another where priorities are not shared.*
- *Scheduling priorities may be at variance.*
- *Roles and objectives may be in conflict.*
- *Elements of a person's role may be internally inconsistent (for example discipline and counselling).*

Furthermore, conflict can occur when goal incompatibility is apparent. Goal incompatibility implies three different factors, namely mutually exclusive goals, lack of resources and different time orientations:

- **Mutually exclusive goals** usually bring about win-lose competition. The one side is threatened by the other side's objectives.
- **A lack of resources:** Most organisations have a specific budget, staff and logistics. When different employees want a share of the resources it could lead to conflict.
- **Different time orientations:** Time orientations differ as the different departments' goals differ. Production crews may need regular feedback

while sales teams may work on a weekly or monthly feedback system. This could lead to conflict between the departments because they do not understand the different goals (Bloisi, 2003:436).

There are many different reasons for conflict within the organisation. Tosi *et al.*, (1994:440) categorise the causes for conflict in terms of individual characteristics such as values, attitudes, beliefs, needs, personality, perceptions and judgements in terms of situational forces such as the degree of interaction between employees, the need for consensus between employees, status differences, communication and responsibility and lastly, organisational structure such as specialisation, differentiation, task interdependence, goals, scarce resources, more than one authority figure, policies and rewards.

Conflict is a reality within the organisation. Some employees thrive on conflict and others turn away from it. In general, it is agreed that conflict usually causes stress and tension.

5.10.2 Approaches to Conflict Resolution

Employees approach conflict differently because of their different frames of reference. Their personality, background and situational factors play a role in how they will approach conflict.

According to Thomas in Senior (1997:173), there are five ways of handling conflict.

- **Competing**

Competing leads to a win/lose scenario. This implies that the conflict will be resolved but the result will only be acceptable to one of the parties. This can be detrimental to the relationship as the losers will have negative feelings because they lost.

- **Collaborating**

This approach to conflict usually leads to the satisfaction of both parties. A high quality solution is gained from participation from both sides and this leads to a win/win situation.

- **Compromising**

Compromising means the needs of both parties are partially satisfied. Both parties have to establish what their resources are like and a trade has to take place with regard to those resources. Trust can be problematic.

- **Avoiding**

Avoiding the conflict leads to a no-win situation. The problem is not being confronted. This approach can lead to frustration because the one party may feel the other party does not see their problem as important.

- **Accommodating**

This approach leads to a win/lose situation. It means that the one party must accept that the other party has a better solution to the problem than what they have. With this approach a good relationship between parties can be maintained.

Employees may become resentful of one another, if they feel that their solution is always put aside. This can be frustrating and lead to stress. Different methods for handling conflict could be used in different situations and there is not one specific method that works at all times.

5.10.3 Methods for managing conflict

Conflict is not always harmful. It is often inevitable within the corporate environment and according to Appleby (1994:168), it can even have positive effects such as:

- ***Bringing hidden issues to the surface.***
- ***Increasing cohesion of a group when directed at an external agent.***
- ***Encouraging creativity and innovation.***
- ***Enhancing communication and making change more acceptable.***

Conflict must not be suppressed, it must be managed as there are negative effects that could come about because of conflict. Gibson, *et al.*, (2000:226) refer to this as dysfunctional conflict. This is when conflict becomes harmful and it has a negative impact on performance of individuals and groups in the organisation.

According to Linstead, *et al.*, (2004:403) there are three main strategies that can be used to address conflict within the organisation:

- ***By changing perceptions and attitudes.***
 - ***The use of symbolism and management of meaning; redefining interests, developing a new superordinate goal or new patterns of rivalry or internal competition.***
 - ***Changing understandings of interdependencies and relationships.***
 - ***Influencing feelings, stereotypes and processes of enactments.***

- ***By changing behaviours.***
 - ***Manipulating patterns of reward and punishment.***
 - ***Training individuals to recognise and deal with conflict resolution, improving bargaining, negotiating and team building skills.***
 - ***Changing interpersonal dynamics.***

- ***By changing structures***
 - ***Redesigning roles and interdependencies.***
 - ***Creating rules that set new frameworks for conflict resolution and arbitration.***
 - ***By introducing third parties as mediators or process consultants.***
 - ***By creating integrating roles or new interface mechanisms.***
 - ***By establishing consultative groups and other warning systems.***

Conflict management strategies are highlighted by Appleby (1997:168) in terms of certain actions such as restructuring within the departments, role clarification, rearrangement of tasks and work locations, incentive and reward policies, training of staff in conflict management and resolution skills, focus on the values and styles of the organisation and lastly, encourage participative and supportive style of leadership which will enhance co-operation and commitment from employees.

The following practical example is an indication of how conflict between employees could cause stress and tension within the corporate environment.

Practical example:

If employees are in conflict with their manager, the employees are concerned about the outcome of the conflict. The employees may feel at risk if they are confrontative with their manager or they may feel that conflict with the manager could have an effect on their possibilities for promotion or salary increases. This concern may lead to stress related symptoms such as headaches or sleeplessness, which could result in a decrease in the performance of the employees.

Each organisation should have a conflict management strategy. The leader of the organisation can play an important role regarding the well-being of the employees, and can make use of effective conflict management strategies to enable employees to resolve their conflicts. The employee assistance/wellness programme within the organisation could also play an important role in educating employees regarding effective conflict management styles.

5.11 LEADERSHIP

Leaders can play a role in the working circumstances of employees. According to Linstead, *et al.*, (2003:345), leaders are in a position to take care of the well being of their employees.

Leaders have to have the emotional capacity to endure uncertainty, frustration and pain and understand fears, stresses and sacrifices, yet the poise and steadiness to instil confidence.

Leaders influence employees and employees often follow the example that the leaders set.

5.11.1 Defining Leadership

Leadership is a concept that has been researched for many years. What is it that makes a person a leader? Why do people follow a leader? These questions and many others have intrigued the minds of researchers from all walks of life. Leaders have existed in all cultures throughout history. There are symbols for “leader” that have existed from as early as 5000 years ago (Adler, 1997:154).

What is a leader? Bloisi (2003:568) describes a leader as follows:

A leader creates a vision and goals and influences others to share that vision and work towards those goals.

5.11.2 Traits of Leadership

It has been said that there is “one best way” to lead. This idea is not about *how* to lead but more about what leaders should be like. This theory has to do with the traits of a leader, for example physical and personality characteristics, skills and abilities, and social factors. These traits are indicative of a successful leader (Senior, 1997:192).

The following leadership traits are listed by Linstead, Fulop and Lilly (2004:328):

- **Drive**
 - ***High desire for achieving.***
 - ***Ambition to get ahead in work and career.***
 - ***High level of energy.***
 - ***Tenacity or persistence in the right things.***
 - ***Initiative to change things and make things happen.***
- **Self confidence**
 - ***Needed to withstand setbacks, persevere through hard times and lead others in new direction.***
 - ***The ability to take hard decisions and stand by them.***
 - ***Managing the perceptions of others on self-confidence and commanding their respect.***
 - ***Emotionally stable.***
- **Leadership motivation**
 - ***The desire to lead.***
 - ***The willingness to assume responsibility.***
 - ***The seeking of power as a means to achieve desired goals***

rather than as an end in itself.

- ***Honesty and integrity***
 - ***The correspondence between word and deed.***
 - ***Being trustworthy.***
 - ***The foundation to attract and retain followers through gaining their trust.***
- ***Cognitive ability***
 - ***Above average intelligence to analyse situations accurately, solve problems effectively and make suitable decisions.***
 - ***Not necessarily a genius.***
 - ***Managing the perceptions of others on intelligence.***
- ***Knowledge of the business***
 - ***Able to gather and assimilate extensive information about company and industry.***
 - ***Necessary for developing suitable visions, strategies and business plans.***

According to Fincham and Rhodes (1999:214), an effective leader is also conscientious, an extrovert, has an openness to experience new things, is agreeable and humble. These leaders usually score low on neuroticism and are emotionally stable.

Not all great leaders have all of the above mentioned traits and the expression of these traits differs from situation to situation. With these traits taken into consideration, there are different leadership styles that occur. These leadership styles can contribute to the frustrations of the employees or they can make the working circumstances of the employees more enjoyable.

5.11.3 Leadership Styles

The following leadership styles will be discussed shortly: the authoritarian leader, the democratic leader, the narcissistic leader, the charismatic leader, the job-centered leader and the employee centered leader.

- **The authoritarian leader**

Authoritarian leaders get other people to do the work and they give them very little room for their own decisions. The employees usually fear the authoritarian leaders because they often threaten them and they make use of their authority and personality to influence them (Appleby, 1994:190).

- **The democratic leader**

Democratic leaders want to persuade the employees regarding a decision or situation, but they encourage the involvement of the employees in decision-making (Appleby, 1994:190). They share and encourage input from colleagues and subordinates (Senior, 1997:195).

- **The narcissistic leader**

Narcissism is explained by Linstead, *et al.*, (2004:348) as follows:

The narcissist, as a result of experiences in childhood, is driven by an anxiety, an inner feeling of lack of self-worth. This anxiety

develops as a form of self absorption or self obsession which can appear as the opposite of this as arrogance, over-confidence, disdain or contempt for others and a ruthless determination to stop at nothing to get what they want. Narcissists learn three basic lessons:

- 1. They must be more than they are.*
- 2. Their value as people is dependant upon the image they project.*
- 3. Other people are objects who must be manipulated to get the validation that narcissists need.*

This type of leader creates problems within the organisation. The narcissist considers loyalty to employees and caring for customers as a sign of weakness (Linstead *et al*, 2004:348).

This type of leader can become a “bully” within the organisation. Steinman (in conversation, 2004) agrees with the researcher that this type of leader often works towards self gain and does not consider who gets hurt in the process. The employees who work with narcissistic leaders experience much stress because of the leader’s behaviour.

- **The charismatic leader**

Charismatic leaders have a quality that is true to themselves. It is not a trait that can be acquired through training; it is a unique part of the charismatic leader. According to Gibson, *et al*. (1994:453) Weber suggested that some leaders are just different to others.

...some leaders have a gift of exceptional qualities – a charisma – that enables them to motivate followers to achieve outstanding performance.

Charismatic leadership is linked with concepts such as vision and ethics, heroism, the ability to inspire, articulation ability, affection from followers, dominating personality and the need for influence (Gibson, *et al.* 1994:455-456).

- **Leaders with concern for the task**

These leaders emphasise high levels of productivity. Task objectives and goals are the first priority (Senior, 1997:195). They are task oriented and the employees that surround them come second to the task.

- **Leaders with concern for people**

These leaders are concerned about the employees as people: their needs, interests, problems and personal development are considered (Senior, 1997:195). In this case the employee comes first and the task plays a secondary role.

There are many different leadership styles that employees have to adjust to. The leadership style that the employees' superior may have, may affect them in such a way that they are motivated or de-motivated about work. It may lead to stress in the lives of the employees or it can initiate a working environment where employees feel comfortable and safe.

5.12 ORGANISATIONAL PROCESSES

Within each organisation there are certain processes that have an effect on the employees within the organisation. Many core factors could affect the employees but according to Fincham and Rhodes (1999:379), there are three organisational processes that need to be recognised, namely change within the organisation, organisational culture and power and politics within the organisation.

5.12.1 Organisational Culture

Organisational culture has become an essential factor when organisational behaviour is being studied. The organisational culture gives the researcher an idea of “how” the organisation does things.

5.12.1.1 Defining Organisational Culture

As with many other concepts, there are many different definitions for organisational culture. The following definitions endeavour to give the reader a greater understanding of what organisational culture is.

- ***Culture is “how things are done around here.” It is what is typical of the organisation, the habits, prevailing attitudes and grown-up pattern of accepted and expected behaviour (Drennan, in Linstead et al., 2004:98).***

- ***Culture can be defined as the set of key values, beliefs, understandings, and norms shared by members of an organisation (Daft and Marcic, 2001:59).***

- ***Culture is therefore:***
 - a. ***Something that is shared by all or almost all members of some social group.***
 - b. ***Something that the older members of the group try to pass on to the younger members.***
 - c. ***Something (as in the case of morals, laws and customs) that shapes behaviour, or...structures one's perception of the world (Adler, 1997:15).***

Therefore, the organisational culture is interwoven into all the activities that take place within the organisation. The culture defines activities. It tolerates some activities and punishes unacceptable activities.

According to Fincham and Rhodes (1999:419), some of the basic attributes of culture are as follows:

- **Culture is symbolic**

Culture is difficult to define in terms of objects. Culture is symbolic, which refers to a sign, an event, an object or a person within the organisation. Often when people have to explain what the organisation that they are working for is like, they tell a story and make use of the mentioned symbols to describe their organisation.

- **Culture is unifying**

Culture refers to a process which binds the employees of an organisation together. Corporate culture reinforces the strengths and goals that create a common responsibility and drive within the organisation.

- **Culture is holistic**

Everything within the organisation forms part of the culture. It refers to the essence of the organisation and it encompasses what is expected of the individuals in the organisation and how people deal with each other in the organisation. The holistic character of the organisation is usually expressed by means of undefined rules. The employees have to know the “rules of the game” within the organisation.

5.12.1.2 The Sources of Culture

According to Drennan in Linstead, et.al. (2004:99) the following twelve essential factors shape the culture within an organisation:

- The influence of a dominant leader.
- Company history and tradition.
- Technology, products and services.
- The industry and its competition.
- Customers.
- Company expectations.
- Information and control systems.
- Legislation and company environment.

- Procedures and policies.
- Rewards systems and measurement.
- Organisation and resources.
- Goals, values and beliefs.

Every organisation has a cultural context. The culture within the organisation can benefit or inhibit the well-being of the corporate employee.

5.12.1.3 The Culture Gap

Culture gaps are relevant in mergers and acquisitions. According to Daft and Marcic (2001:66), the cultural gap can be defined as follows:

The difference between desired cultural norms and values and actual norms and values is called the culture gap.

Many mergers and acquisitions are not as successful as hoped for, because the companies can integrate the financial systems and production technologies, but they are unable to integrate the unwritten values and norms. These unwritten norms and values are part of what creates the culture of the organisation and cannot just be carried over automatically (Daft & Marcic, 2001:66).

This culture gap could be a cause for stress in the lives of the employees.

Practical example

If the employees are working for organisation A, which is merging with a bigger, stronger organisation B, the employees will have to make adjustments to the new working environment. They will have to adjust to the changes in the work, but also to the difference in organisational culture. The way things were done in the past may not be acceptable in the future.

5.12.2 Organisational Change

Change is inevitable within a changing environment. In the current day and age organisations need to be dynamic and change with the needs within the environment to ensure that they keep their place in the global market. Senior (1997:7) refers to change as follows:

The forces which operate to bring about change in organisations can be thought of as winds which are many and varied – from small summer breezes which merely disturb a few papers to mighty howling gales which cause devastation to structures and operations causing constant re-orientation of purpose and re- building.

This constant re-orientation and re-building within the organisation places demands on corporate employees to make adjustments in terms of their work on a regular basis. Corporate employees may experience higher stress levels because they have to adhere to changing demands all the time.

5.12.3 Change can be Difficult

Within the highly globalised and competitive market, the ability to change is something organisations pride themselves in. Often change is a pleasant idea but the actual implementation thereof is difficult within the organisation. According to Fincham and Rhodes (1999:398), change is not as simple as it seems:

... to begin with change can be enormously difficult to get going in the organisation.

They also state that there are some obstacles or “blocks” such as emotional and cultural “blocks” in the change process that make the process even more difficult.

- **Emotional block**

Emotional blocks can occur when people feel threatened by change and they fear the uncertainty of the future. People do not always see change as an improvement to what they already have. This may lead to avoidance behaviour and evasiveness. They often have an impaired ability to evaluate their circumstances (Fincham & Rhodes, 1999:398).

This situation can cause much stress in the lives of corporate employees, because they do not perceive the change as necessary and they do not always believe that they have the ability to cope with the approaching change. This could lead to uncertainty and anxiety which could result in

stress related symptoms such as headaches, exhaustion and a lack of motivation.

- **Cultural block**

The culture of corporate employees may be hostile to change because they are loyal to the establishment. They do not like the fact that change is being shown in a humoristic way and making light of the change is frowned upon and is often seen as frivolous (Fincham & Rhodes, 1999:398). The change is affecting their lives, so they do not want it to go by as something unimportant.

In South Africa, this aspect needs to be taken into consideration. With the diverse cultures and languages in this country (and thus every South African organisation), it is possible that misunderstandings can occur because one group of people is not aware of the principles that form part of the cultural background of another group of people.

5.12.4 Change is a Social Process

Change is often seen by the leaders of the organisation as an event, but because there are human beings involved, it should actually be seen as a process. Change does not take place in a moment. It takes place over time and with many different role players involved (Fincham & Rhodes, 1999:401).

5.12.4.1 Managing to Change

If the organisation wants change to come about in a positive manner, they cannot be idealistic about how fast it will happen and how everybody will buy into the idea of change. According to Ficham and Rhodes (1999:404), *change means changing people not things*. The following aspects have to be taken into consideration:

- **Investing in people**

The corporate employees need to receive a message that the organisation values them. Ficham and Rhodes (1999:404) state that investment in employees is an opportunity for the organisation to expose the employees to the organisation's culture. They describe it as follows:

In depth and long term skills improvement is an opportunity for an organisation to convey its culture and develop feelings of commitment.

- **Strong leadership**

Strong organisational leadership is essential in creating a vision for the corporate employees that they feel they can commit to. The organisation needs leaders at all levels who can nurture this vision and motivate the employees to change.

- **Acceptance of change**

For corporate employees to accept the change that is taking place, they must experience a degree of ownership. This means that the corporate employees have to play an active part in the process. There must be some form of communication whereby the employees are able to make their ideas known to management. If they notice that some of their ideas are being implemented, they feel more involved in the process.

- **Information**

Information relieves some of the uncertainty that the corporate employees are experiencing. Ficham and Rhodes (1999:404) explain this as follows:

People will only accept change if they feel well informed about its progress and how they are likely to be affected....Openness and a willingness to share information are a valuable means of securing change, and firms are well advised to think in terms of establishing, whether formally or informally, an agreed information policy in advance of any upcoming change.

5.12.5 Organisational Power

There are certain factors within the corporate environment that influence the well-being of the corporate employees. One of these factors, as part of the organisational process, is not always an obvious factor, but it can have a negative or positive influence on the well-being of the corporate employee.

What is power within the organisation? Drummond (2000:123) describes power as follows:

A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something B would not otherwise do.

It seems that power is therefore the actual ability to influence others in a desired direction. An individual, group or social unit has power if it controls information, knowledge or resources desired by another individual, group or social unit (Daft, 2000:504).

Power influences behaviour and changes the course of events within an organisation. People who have the power have the ability to make a decision regarding the lives and functioning of other employees. They are usually the people who decide in which department employees work or do not work, whether employees receive the resources that they need to do their job or not and whether corporate employees are promoted or not. Many decisions lie with the people who have the power and these decisions can affect the lives of the corporate employees and therefore, these decisions can cause stress or lessen stress in the lives of the employees.

5.12.5.1 Empowerment

Daft (2000:556) states that the only way organisations can survive is if they empower their employees and more specifically, the middle managers. According to this author employees need the following four elements to enable

them to act more freely and accomplish their jobs:

- ***Employees receive information about company performance.***
- ***Employees have knowledge and skills to contribute to company goals.***
- ***Employees have the power to make substantive decisions.***
- ***Employees are rewarded based on company performance.***

If employees are empowered to do their jobs effectively, it has a positive effect on their self esteem and they feel more in control of their work demands.

5.13 EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

Organisations have come to realise that it is possible to address the number and intensity of stressors through the implementation of employee wellness programmes. An increasing number of organisations have implemented employee wellness programmes to, among others, address the stress that employees are experiencing within the organisation (Tosi *et al.*, 1994:294). Employee wellness programmes are effective in reducing work stress and they cost the organisation much less than frequent turnover and absenteeism of employees (Tosi, *et al.*, 1994:294).

Drummond (2000:219) states that employee wellness programmes are a way in which organisations can address stress directly. Stress management programmes can be proactive or re-active and these programmes can improve the general health and well-being of the employees within the organisation.

Social workers can play a prominent role within organisations with regard to the general

well-being of the employees. Social workers can become involved with formal employee wellness programmes within the organisations or they can become involved in the training department where they could focus on soft skills such as communications skills training, conflict management training, assertiveness training and stress management. The social worker can make a positive contribution within the corporate environment.

5.14 CONCLUSION

The organisation is the environment in which the corporate employee has to function on a daily basis. Organisations differ from one another. Some organisations allow for involvement from employees and some organisations have a rigid and formal way of functioning. Some working environments are more positive for the corporate employee to function in than others.

Corporate employees must adjust to the organisational environment in which they find themselves and they have to function optimally in relation to other employees. This behaviour of employees takes place whilst there are ongoing organisational processes within the organisation. Employees behave in a certain way because they are unique individuals, they behave in certain ways because they stand in relation to others and they behave in certain ways because they cannot separate themselves from the larger organisational process.

All these factors have an effect on organisational behaviour. Within the mentioned organisational environment, the employee is expected to adjust and to perform and this could lead to stress in the lives of some of the employees. Employees need to be made aware of the fact that these factors can cause stress in their lives and what they can do to address these sources of stress in their lives pro-actively.