CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1. INTRODUCTION

Working mothers the world over experience the stresses of multiple roles. In the Indian Hindu social order, where the birth of a girl-child is still unwelcome, the stress experience of the urban Hindu working mothers is entrenched in the complexities of traditional beliefs and simultaneous exposure to modernity. As women juggle with their roles within the family and in the paid employment world, which is largely dominated by men, research over the years has identified some typical stressors working mothers have to cope with.

Housework and child-care are the two main sources of stressors for working mothers (Alpert & Lauscher, 1982). Additionally, the stressors reported by women professionals are variability of workload, lack of participation in decision-making, sex discrimination, work and family imposing on relaxation and role conflict (Ghadiolly & Kumar, 1989; Hammelgarm & Lang, 1991; Reifman, Biernat & Lang, 1991).

Paid employment is associated with better mental health in married women (Gove & Geerken, 1977; Kessler & McRae, 1981; Thoits, 1983). Researchers have pointed out the agentic and communal benefits available
to married working women which may not be available to non-working women (Stewart & Malley, 1988) that enhances mental well-being. The association between paid employment and mental health, however, is weaker in the case of women with children than it is for women without children (Emmons et al., 1990; Kessler & McRae, 1981). This relationship is further not so strong in the case of women with young children (Gove & Mangione, 1983). The presence of small children has also been found to reduce the marital satisfaction of working women (White, Booth, & Edward, 1986; Staines et al., 1978). Staying out of work or reducing work involvement to meet family demands does not help a woman’s career (Fraker, 1984; Rapaport & Rapaport, 1978) particularly considering several years of education and training.

While housework and child-care are identified as the main stressors by working mothers, the father’s contribution to these tasks was found to be between 10 to 20 hours per week as compared to 30 to 60 hours put in by the working mothers (Denmark, Shaw, & Cialli, 1985; Gunter & Gunter, 1990). The working mothers take up personal responsibility for more household and child-care tasks than the father (Bryson & Johnson, 1978;
Lovrich & Gmelch, 1986; Pleck, 1978, 1986; Weingarten, 1978; Yogev, 1981). Despite being employed, household duties still remain a woman’s forte (Berardo, Shehan, & Leslie, 1987; Berk, 1985; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Blood & Wolfe, 1980; Coverman & Sheley, 1986 Geerken & Gove, 1983; Hartman, 1991; Miller & Garrison, 1982; Oakley, 1975; Ross, 1987; Scanzone, 1978). Working wives work many more hours than full-time housewives when hours worked on job and home are added (Hedges, Barnett, 1972; Walker & Gangar, 1973; Walker & Wood, 1976). Another interesting finding was that working women (both professionals and non-professionals) use fewer problem-solving strategies as coping devices to deal with stress at home than at work (Koch et al., 1991). Perhaps as Jessie Bernard (1978) explained, women more readily accept a feminist stand outside the home, that is in the cash nexus world, than within the care-nexus world of the family. Besides this, research over the years has shown that conformity to traditional sex-role beliefs imbibed during the process of socialization explained why women appraised and coped with stressors the way they did.
Gender role beliefs are acquired during the process of socialization, which being a part of the culture canon, is the product of socio-cultural norms, economic conditions, historical settings and religious beliefs. The role of culture in an individual’s psychosocial development was given empirical attention as far back as 1897 by Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis.

Eriksen (1950), summarized the influence of culture on the psychological development of the individual by saying, “instead of emphasizing what the pressures of the social organization are apt to deny the child, we wish to clarify what the social order first grants the child, as it keeps it alive and as in administering to his needs in specific ways introduces him to a particular cultural style.”

The dominant feature of both eastern and western cultures has been the subordination of the female child. In the eastern and in the Indian (Hindu) context, especially, gender discrimination is substantiated by religious and metaphysical beliefs. In the West, on the other hand, the reasons for the same are more economic in nature.
In the Indian and the Hindu context particularly, gender role beliefs are reinforced by religious and metaphysical norms. The two important texts that expound gender roles of women in society, namely, the Arthashastra and Manusmriti, are considered as sacred texts by historians (Mukherji, 1978). Within the Hindu social structure, gender roles develop against the backdrop of a very unique world-view. The most dominant feature of the entire Hindu social structure is a world-view that emphasizes oneness with God, Totality or the Universe, by performing one’s duties as prescribed within the sacred texts (Kakar, 1981; Prabhu, 1932; Taylor, 1950). Gender role beliefs, therefore, become emphatic and severe reinforcers for metaphysical rewards and punishments for the Hindus. Central to the Hindu world-view are the theories of karma and rebirth. All beings reap the fruits of their action in keeping with the laws of nature. An individual comes into this world with certain latent desires and unfulfilled duties of previous births to be carried out in this lifetime. All actions performed in the present lifetime will give results in accordance to the sum total credit accumulated in past lives. Hence suffering is looked upon as a way of life, attributing suffering to some past action that need to
surface and wear out in this life time. So in fact, an individual is responsible for all her/his action although she/he does not know the outcome of her/his action which depends on accumulated credits of good or bad deeds. Again the moral choice between positive and negative action is the individual’s responsibility (Furer - Haimendorf, 1974). Even being born male or female is attributed to good or bad deeds of the individuals.

The Hindu view of the female has been one of duality. On the one hand, the female is regarded as nature which is wild and destructive, therefore, needing control by men. On the other hand, the female is regarded as “Shakti” or energy which is nurturant and benevolent (Wadley, 1979).

While the former view has taken precedence in social dealings in its manifestation as gender role beliefs and norms, theorizing that male control makes women truly nurturant, the latter belief is reflected in the worship of goddesses such as Saraswati, Laxmi, Kali, Durga and Savitri. For example, the Streedharma Paddhati written by Tryambakyaivan in the 18th century Tanjore kingdom, describes explicitly the duties a woman must perform from sunrise to sundown. This work based on the norms laid down for
women within the Arthasthstra, Manusmriti, Kamasutra and Puranas asserts that such explicit gender norms for women are essential because the female is inherently evil, lazy, greedy and all things attributed to nature in its wildness (Leslie, 1989). As women in the west cope with feminism in the post modern era, Indian (Hindu) women cope with the transition from traditional to more egalitarian gender role beliefs within a dual-earner family set-up against the backdrop of beliefs that have grave societal and personal sanctions. The influence of such culturally influenced personality variables as beliefs about gender roles should yield new insights into the nature of psychological stress as reflected through daily hassles, keeping in view the cognitive (interactional) model of stress appraisal. Personality variables such as gender roles, control, and occupational status as moderators of stress, assume a certain predictive importance in understanding the dynamics of stress causation in working mothers in India.

1.2 CONCEPTS USED IN THE PRESENT STUDY

There were five variables studied namely, stress, gender role beliefs, occupational status, locus of control and health.
1.2.1 Stress

In the physiological and medical sciences, stress refers to the changes in the physiological functioning in response to some stimuli. In psychophysiology stress refers to any stimulus that produces a strain in the organism and results in abnormal behavior (Selye, 1956).

Selye (1950, 1956) showed the role played by the endocrine as well as the autonomic system in the occurrence of stress. He defined stress as a condition which occurs when normal homeostatic regulatory mechanism of the body fails to adapt to a situation.

Selye’s studies revealed the effects of certain hormones released in the event of stress. In the first stage of alarm reaction, when stress is experienced severely, the organism goes into a stage of shock and the body resistance to stress drops. At this stage, there is a release of hormones such as nor-epinephrine from the adrenal medulla and corticoids and adrenocorticotropic hormones (ACTH). These releases weaken the immune system and if the stress is too severe, the organism may die. Following the stage of immunosuppression is the countercheck or alarm reaction phase in which the typical stress syndrome is seen. At this point, there is a shrinkage
of the thymus lymph nodes, ulceration and adrenal enlargement that occurs
due to the ACTH and corticoid response.

The second stage is known as the stage of resistance. At this point,
the stress response is not necessary and the corticoid activity returns to
normal when the local adaptive responses of stress breaks down and the
organism enters the stage of exhaustion.

French, Rodgers and Cobb (1974) developed a subjective measure
of the person environment (P-Environment) fit, where the person is asked
what level of qualitative workload he prefers and relates his response to the
demand made upon him by his work role, by supervisors or by other
aspects of the work environment to determine what was least stressful to
the individual. Ivanivich and Matteson (1984) further defined stress in
terms of person- environment relationship, where a misfit between a
person's capability and environmental demand was supposed to result in
stress.

Coffer and Appley (1964) defined stress as the state of in which an
individual's well-being is perceived to be endangered and she thinks it
necessary to divert all her energies to protect herself.
Kahn et al. (1964) drew research attention to a form of stress known as role stress. Role stress for Kahn et al. (1964) was supposed to have consequences on the variables such as job related conflicts. Role stress resulted from the specific demands or nature of the role. Role overload or excessive demands on role expectations, perceptions, self-role congruence fall in this concept of role stress which is also what organizational stress is all about (Speisman, 1964).

Paine (1982) developed the concept of the Burnout Stress Syndrome (BOSS). Veningle and Spradley (1981) showed the stages of BOSS. In the honeymoon stage feelings of euphoria, excitement, enthusiasm, challenge and pride are present. In the next fuel shortage stage, feelings of loss, fatigue and confusion are noticed which is the result of the individuals drawing on energy reserves for adaptation. In the chronic symptom stage, fuel shortage is followed by physiological symptoms, such as chronic exhaustion, physical illness, anger and depression. In the crisis stage, the individual suffers from high blood-pressure, peptic ulcers, chronic backache, and headache. In the hitting-the-wall stage of BOSS, total exhaustion of one’s adaptation energy occurs which may mean that
recovery is not always possible. This stage marks the end of one’s professional career.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) examined the cognitive, cultural and social factors involved in stress. Stress was understood as a process occurring in two phases: The first or primary stage, where the individual becomes aware of the stresses and experiences stress through his/her social-cultural, religious and other cognitive filters. In the second stage of appraisal, the individual responds to the stresses. The role of belief as a cognitive variable in stress appraisal, both as mediators and moderators, has been explored with the help of Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) model of stress, with coping, which takes place at the secondary stage of stress appraisal.

Earlier Lazarus and Launier (1978) noted that “the meaning sphere encompassed by the term stress” is any event in which environmental and internal demands (or both) tax or exceeds the adaptive resources of an individual’s social or tissue systems” (p.298). They emphasized a “transactional mediation, time oriented and process-oriented perspective”
(p. 321). Most of the research in an interaction model of stress was initiated by research in stress and anxiety. The interactional model which takes both person variables and situation variables into consideration is an appropriate model for research.

Stress has been measured by assessing life event charges in a persons' life (Holmes & Masuda, 1974; Masuda & Rahe, 1967). Stressful life events serve as predisposers or precursors of illness. Holmes and Rahe (1967), Schmale and Engel (1967), Grant et al. (1974), have shown through their studies the strong and positive relationship between stressful life events and illness. Shejwal and Ram (1983) studied the no sex differences in the perception of stressful life events in a sample of 40 accident cases.

Lazarus and others (1981, 1984) presented another approach to stress measurement. This focused on upsets of an individual's life on a daily basis that were irritating, frustrating, and distressing incidents that occur in our "daily hassles". Daily hassles are indicators of psychological stress which is an experience that involves feelings, attitudes, motives and
expectations (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Major life events are known to impact health through the experience of daily hassles (Eckenrode, 1984; Kessler, Price and Wortman 1983).

In accordance with the identity theory (Simon, 1992; Stryker, 1987), it is married mothers who experience more psychological stress than men, (Simon, 1992) "result of the multiple demanding roles which results in greater commitment to marriage which for women is a very prominent feature in their lives (Simon, 1992).

Eckenrode and Gore (1991) proposed a model for stress processes which crosses the boundary between work and family. The model gave insight into the role played by stressors in daily life and the social context in which an individual finds himself. The model basically proposes that stress in the workplace affects family, and vice versa. The model considers stressors (both ongoing and eventful) coping (resources and strategies), health-related outcomes, and characteristics of the participant (gender). The model also takes into consideration the process of stress transmission from one role to another, one person to another, stress mediating processes and stress moderating processes. Stress may move across work and family.
and have a significant impact. On the other hand, effective coping behavior in one role may either be dysfunctional or may display positive or negative spillover in another role setting. The work and family stress model further considers mediating processes or pathways through which stress effects are exerted across the work and family boundary. For example, work-family interference may lead to desire to put in fewer hours of work (Moen & Dempster-McClain, 1987) which could result in lower productivity and motivation on the job (Eckenrode & Gore, 1991). Contextual factors are individual, social or organizational variables that interact with stressful events to impact the transmission and suffering of stress directly or indirectly. The experience of paid employment is not the same for men and women. Also, the positive experiences which women have at work have a beneficial effect on the women's mental health which in turn gets carried over to the other family members (Piotrkowski & Chris Christoph, 1992).

Pestonjee (1992) described how in ancient Indian thought, psychological stress was caused by the emotional states of lust, greed, fear, jealousy, and depression. Conflicts, competitiveness and aggression are known to cause situations of stress which mainly occur as a result of
unhealthy interpersonal transactions and natural calamities. Extremes of temperature, storms, and so on cause environmental stress to the individual. In Indian psychology, stress is personal in nature and is called adhyatmik, situational stress is termed adhibhotic and environmental stress is called adhidevik. Physiological stress is caused by an imbalance of the three fundamental physiological constituents classified within Ayurveda, namely, vata, kapha, and pitta.

Rao (1983) has discussed the origin of stress in Indian thought and has shown that in Sanskrit words such as klesa means stress. Klesas are according to Patanjali’s Yogasutras, ego-involvements or strong likes and dislikes which are considered afflictions (Palsane, Bhavsar, Goswami & Evans, 1999). The false ego-involvement with matter in the form of one’s own body and other beings or objects around oneself is due to ignorance of one’s true self. This ignorance causes unfulfilled desires to lead to frustrations, depression and anger (Palsane, Bhavsar, Goswami & Evans, 1999).
1.2.2 Gender Role Beliefs

Beliefs are defined as a set of cognitive constructs, which act as filters and referents with the help of which one perceives and appraises reality. Beliefs also influence appraisal at the unconscious level (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984). Fishbein (1987) defined beliefs as hypotheses regarding the nature or objects and the types of actions that should be taken. E. C. Tolman’s (1971) belief value matrix is the system of expectancies which combines categorizations and value judgment valancies brought to any new situation and which partly determines his/her response to the environment.

Religious beliefs are personal resource variables in the form of commitment... A religious belief is a cognitive schema that may serve as a basis of hope or may inhibit coping efforts in the experience of stress (Park & Cohen, 1991).

An irrational belief on the other hand is defined in terms of the dysfunctional emotions and behavior they supposedly cause. One way to understand irrational beliefs has been forwarded by Ellis (1962, 1979, 1980, 1984) where he points out that our irrational beliefs are absolutistic and dogmatic, and are responsible for the dysfunctional emotions and behavior.
He has identified 10 common irrational beliefs found among people (Ellis, 1962; Ellis & Harper, 1975). Affect and irrational beliefs are known to be interrelated. Their reciprocity was noticed by Madigan and Bollenbach (1986) when the induction of negative affect predicted an increased endorsement of several of the specific beliefs.

Sex role orientation is defined as a set of roles specific to a particular sex which an individual imbibes as a result of socialization, biological factors and socio-cultural pressures such as religion, media and so on (Donnellson, 1975). Bem (1974) distinguished and measured through the Bem Sex Role Inventory three sex role orientations—masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. According to Bem’s gender schema theory (1974), masculinity and femininity are orthogonal dimensions that reflect instrumentality and expressivity, respectively. Bem (1974, 1981) conceptualized psychological androgyny, a term that signifies the integration of both masculine and feminine traits. An individual was feminine if she was high on feminine items and low on masculine items and vice versa, androgynous, if she was high on both masculine and feminine item, and undifferentiated if low on both masculine and feminine items.
A readiness on the part of the individual to organize and encode information about the self in terms of cultural definitions of maleness or femaleness consists of the society's gender schema and is theorized as the gender schematic theory as proposed by Bem (1981). Beliefs about sex roles are formed as result of gender schematic processing.

Gender role socialization may lead males and females to place different values on goals and activities (Eccles, 1987). Typically, sex-typed individuals are uncomfortable or will avoid performing cross-sex tasks because cross-sex behavior is not in keeping with their sex role orientation (Bem 1975). Sex-typed individuals who perform cross-sex activities, report psychological discomfort and more negative feeling about themselves (Bem 1975).

Many organizations are sex-typed which is why gender socialization becomes important (Long, 1989). Women who seek male-dominated jobs makes women experience greater strain as a result of out-of-role behavior than women in feminine occupations (Bem, 1975).

Wanting high paid, and/or higher status jobs would be a source of conflict for some women because they are typically supposed to be after
jobs that satisfy their need for nurture. However, women whose work roles are congruent with their sex role orientation may experience less strain and cope more effectively (Long, 1989).

A structural viewpoint (Parasuraman & Cleek, 1982) of stress and coping suggests that women in sex-typed jobs (feminine jobs) are likely to experience low pay, and low quality job responsibilities and such women may also assume responsibility for taking care of home and children, often resisting external influence. Consequently, women in masculine sex-typed occupations perceive themselves as having more efficient coping skills, are more self-efficacious and experience less strain regardless of their sex role orientation (Terborg, 1985). Lazarus and Folkman (1980) suggested that coping strategies among men and women differed because of gender differences in the nature of the jobs. They argued that women were more likely to hold lower level positions in which there were fewer opportunities to engage in problem solving processes. The internal responses (appraisals) to the stressful situation are mediated by a learned sex role orientation according to the socialization theory (Bem, 1981). Therefore, as
children are raised in less sex stereotyped ways, the appraisals of internal processes will be altered, especially in their choice of coping skills (Park & Cohen, 1991).

The gender role beliefs of Hindu women were explored for their relationship with stress in the present study. Their Hindu traditional beliefs about women are patriarchal and based on the assumption that the female is inherently evil and, therefore, must be controlled by the male. Females are socialized on this belief to view themselves in relation to other significant people in their lives. They are taught to be good daughters, good wives, good daughters-in-law and good mothers (Kakar, 1985). The Hindu traditional beliefs emphasize the nurturant and relational aspects of being a female. Thus a Hindu woman's identity is in relation to her father, husband or son only.

These traditional beliefs based on ancient spiritual texts enjoin that one is born a female because of past bad deeds and, therefore, she rids herself of her sins by being an obedient daughter and wife and a nurturant mother and daughter-in-law. Failing which she will be reborn in worse socio-economic conditions. To be childless is a shame and a woman truly
becomes a respectable adult only after she bears for her husband's family a male child. Female infanticide though on a decline (George, Abel & Miller 1992), has not been completely wiped off the face of India. Further, it is believed that a woman's sins cause her to become a widow and the chaste woman dies before her husband's death.

All austerities a woman performs are for her husband and children only. It is further stated in the Vedic scriptures that the husbands is god to the wife, and serving and looking after him is equal to serving God (Ram, 1999; Talwar, 1984). A Hindu woman thus needs no other penance or austerity to attain salvation or a good life in the next birth.

1.2.3. Occupational Status

Working mothers work to add to the family's income or for self-actualization (Scarr, Philips, McCartney, 1989). A non-traditional occupation is defined as professional, administrative or managerial. These positions are typically occupied by 65% men (Marshall, 1987). Over 80% of the traditional occupations are filled by women (Long, 1989). These occupations include clerical, secretarial, nursing and teaching positions. Women in traditional jobs experience stress due to low pay, low quality
jobs and fewer opportunities to engage in problem solving activities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1980).

Research on work and family has isolated gender, presence of young children and employment status as important factors related to work or family conflicts. Women's career patterns have been consolidated under six models of career family involvement by Lee (1994). The six models are developed keeping in mind the level of involvement in one's career and family and the presence of children. Each model has its own costs and benefits. The six patterns of women's careers are: Career Pre-eminent Sustained, Career Pre-eminent Modified, Simultaneous Career and Family Modified, Simultaneous Career and the Family, Sequencing-Career Family Career, Sequencing Family Career and Career Family Pre-eminent.

Schwartz (1989) pointed out that women professionals and managers who opt for career family pattern may not be able to devote committed hours at work because of their need to spend time with their children. Such women should be allowed to work at home or part-time so that the organization does not lose out on the professionally qualified
services of these women and in turn it would offer them an alternative career plan.

1.2.4 Locus of Control

Rotter (1966) developed the concept of locus of control from individuals who ignore reinforcement contingencies (Phares, 1976). Locus of control has been studied as an important personality variable especially as a moderator of negative life events (Lefcourt & Miller, 1981). Rotter (1966) distinguished two types of beliefs about control. Internals, according to him, believed that they had control over the outcome of events in their lives. Externals on the other hand, attributed the result of outcome to God, luck and significant others. Studies have also shown that externals are more likely than internals to conform to group judgment (Crowne & Liverant, 1963), to be manipulated by an experimenter (Gerre, 1966; Strickland, 1970) and to change their attitude to conform to authority (Ritchie & Phares, 1969; Rychman, Rodda & Sheman, 1972). Internals more often resist external influence techniques. When considering locus of control as a moderator of stress, the person X environment congruence theory gives a substantive explanation.
The person X environment congruence theory as put forth by Watson and Baumal (1967) is an application of a more general person-environment congruences model as first suggested by Pervin (1968) and French, Rodgers and Cobb (1974), to the area of control. They stated that firstly internals who believe they can control the environment adapt better to the environment that does not respond to their efforts. Secondly, internals who believe they have little control over their environment adapt better to the environment that is not responsive to their control efforts than to an environment that is controllable.

Rothbaum, Weisz and Snyder (1982) postulated a two-process model as an alternative to what they described as the uncontrollability theory. The model suggests that at the primary control level, attempts are made to change the world to fit the need of the self, and at the secondary level, efforts are made at fitting in with the world. These authors explained that people strive for both and suggested that what is seen as lack of control is in fact an individual's striving for secondary control.

From an interactional perspective, locus of control as a personality construct is useful to the extent that it helps in predicting the way in which
people interact with their environment. Locus of control construct has predictive value as research findings suggest its usefulness in understanding difference in cognitive and motivational variables that are relevant to the individual's response to the environment (Lefcourt, 1976; Phares, 1976).

The locus of control construct has high predictive value as a moderator of stress although requiring study with other variables (Lefcourt, 1993).

1.2.5 Health

Paid employment has a salutary effect on working mothers when their desire to work and role demands are similar (Repetti, Mathews & Waldron, 1989). Health is primarily defined as lack of illness (Breznitz & Goldberger, 1982, 1994). Until recently, health was associated with physical well-being, however, the term has now extended to even mental well-being.

Research in the area of stress-related diseases is also looking at the positive influences of stress on health (Selye, 1974, 1977). Lazarus and Launier (1978) constructed the Daily Uplifts Scale as against the Daily Hassles Scale, to consider the effect of such variables on the health of the
individual. The function of the brain is essential in understanding how
psycho-social factors cause bodily changes. Though the brain is the primary
identifier of threats and performs the tasks of altering, appraising and
coping, all parts of the body experience stress when coping breaks down.
Some regions such as the hypothalamic, pituitary, endocrine axis, immune
system, reticular activating system, involuntary and strained muscle system
and the cognitive, affective integrating centers of the brain, are
especially unprotected from the damage when the coping mechanism fails.

Stress causes disease by lowering or exaggerating the immune
response system (Stein, Keller, & Schiefer, 1981) and creates endocrine
problem through either hypo- or hyper-activity (Lipton, 1976). Further,
alteration in the balance of autonomic control results in cardiovascular,
respiratory, secretory and visceral systems (Lisunder, 1979).

Stress alters sleep pattern, impacts protein metabolism,
hormone secretion and other vegetative functions (Weitzman, Boyar,
Kappen, & Hellimen, 1975). It also changes peptide releases in extra-CNS
sites (Marx, 1979). Stress affects the neurotransmitter, neuromodular and
neuroendocrine activities of the brain which affect health in a variety of
ways such as change in eating habits, alcohol consumption, drug consumption and an accident-prone behavior (Antelman & Caggina, 1977). For example, Type A behavior pattern and coronary heart disease has a significant association in both men and women (Friedman & Rosenman, 1959; Rosenman & Friedman, 1961). Data suggest that women clerical and sales staff with children have a higher risk of coronary heart disease (Haynes et al., 1975; Haynes & Feinlieb, 1980).

Within the Indian Ayurvedic system of medicine, physical and mental disorders are regarded as suffering and are due to imbalances of the physical and mental constituents. The physical constituents called dosas in Sanskrit include vata, pitta and kapha (wind, bile and mucus) and the mental constituents gunas, in Sanskrit, are satwa (consciousness, bliss), rajas (activity), and tamas (inertia) (Safaya, 1976).

1.3 THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study was undertaken to explore the stress experience of women professionals and non-professionals. The problems addressed in the present study focused on beliefs about sex roles and control with
regard to occupational status and stress as experienced by working mothers. As industrialization takes firm root in India, traditional values and beliefs change towards more egalitarian ones both within and outside the family. An understanding of the stress experience of working mothers would offer new insights for changes that are necessary to improve the quality of life for women.

1.3.1 Statement of the Problem

Psychological stress in working mothers: A comparative study of women professionals and non-professionals in India.

1.3.2 Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study

1. To examine the role of independent variables such as sex role orientation, traditional Hindu gender role beliefs, occupational status, and locus of control in the stress experienced by Hindu working mothers and the impact of these variables on their health.

2. To understand the interactive effects of the above independent variables on stress among Hindu working mothers.
3. To examine the role of locus of control on the health of Hindu working mothers.

4. To understand the direct and indirect relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

1.3.3 Significance of the Study

The present study on sex role identity, gender beliefs, occupational status and locus of control in their relationship to stress and health, sex role orientation or beliefs about one's sex role identity has predictive value for stress causation because of its centrality to the individual's self-perceptions. In cognitive and transactional stress models, the role of person-variables such as sex role identity or locus of control were found mediating events-stress relationship. The health of the working mother as an outcome of the above mediations is significant to studies in order to develop models of resilience. It becomes imperative that we understand what factors contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing of working mothers. While in the West, research on dual-earner families and women's mental and physical health is given credence at the State's policy making level, India faces paucity in this area. An awareness of the dynamics of
dual-earner families and the stress of working mothers in particular is necessary if any change in attitude is to take place in both male and female sex roles. It is very important to identify the specific needs of women while tailoring stress management programs not only for the professionals but also for women in traditional jobs (King, 1991). It is also important that studies focusing on the Indian population be undertaken so that scholarly implications are not made based on Western research only (Sharma, 1988).

It is hoped that such studies would make organizations with a female workforce introduce practical changes such as flexible work hours, day-care centers on worksite for children of employees and so on. A more sensitive, and humanistic approach is envisioned from policy makers which would make the quality of women's lives better and promote, in turn, better work output.

1.3.4 Rationale for the Study

Considering the increase of educated married women in the workforce a study such as this one was undertaken to explore the personality variables that act as mediators or moderators of stress. A study of Hindu working women especially, was undertaken in view of
the rapid westernization of India cities which have contributed towards
cchange in traditional beliefs and if this in turn was helping to reduce or
increase the stress both within and outside the home. Slavia, et. al.(1991)
has developed a model, which is an extension of Lazarus, and Folkman's
(1991) stress model. This model of stress is an attempt to understand
cultural variables and apply it for counseling. It is called "Multiculturalism -
a fourth force in counseling". A related issue is the one with regard to the
status of research regarding women in psychology and extricating it from
any sexist bias. There has been a paucity in addressing real issues about
women in India and in the field of psychology inspite of several studies
conducted by women in this country (Prakash, 1995). A study such as this
is also one attempt in the direction towards the understanding of factors
involved in researching women's psychology.

The study of the occupational status of women in relation to
personality variables will lend interesting insights into the kind of stress
they experience. The role of mother within the Hindu culture receives
much attention from significant others within the family and society at
large. A working mother undergoes many stresses and strains to overcome personal limitations to meet societal and familial expectations in order to pursue her career aspirations. While women professionals experience job-satisfaction, women non-professionals are largely deprived of a positive work experience with the result that they feel more stressed. The focus of the study was to mainly understand the role of beliefs about gender roles and personal control in stress causation and their impact on health.

1.4 SUMMARY

The chapter gave an introduction to the problem addressed in the present study. An analysis of cultural variables such as gender role beliefs and beliefs about controllability of events and other variables like health, occupational status and demographic variables were discussed.

Psychological and physical well-being were found to be positively correlated to working married women but this association has not been as significant in the case of such women with children. Daily hassles as
experienced by working mothers were investigated in relation to such variables as gender role belief and beliefs about controllability.

Research has found that traditional gender role beliefs can be sources of stress whereas an internal locus of control was found to be a stress buffer for working mothers. Women with an internal locus of control also enjoyed better health because typically, internally controlled people were more health conscious. This study addressing stress in working mothers was significant in view of progressively increasing number of mothers in the workforce in Indian cities and towns. Their health, family and job performance was of equal importance and were interdependent.

The significance of healthy mothers in any society cannot be overemphasized. This, therefore, was one of the many studies taking cognizance of this significance.