Chapter-I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Stress

Stress is derived from the Latin word *stringere* which means ‘to draw tight’. Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, demand or resource related to what the individual desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important (Cooper *et al.*, 2002). Stress has been a focus of study in medical science where it has been defined as a perturbation of the body’s homeostasis. This demand on mind-body occurs when it tries to cope with incessant changes in life. In the organizational context, stress has been found to be experienced by employees during job insecurity, performance expectations, technology changes, and personal and family problems. A more generalized description is provided by Capalan *et al.* (1975) who suggest that stress is any characteristic of the job environment. Stress is a term used to designate a wide range of man’s needs arising in response to various extreme effects. In attempting to satisfy the needs, an individual may have to face failure sometimes. When individual’s efforts in satisfying a need are thwarted, he is subjected to a number of stresses. Stress may be caused by frustration, anxiety, conflicts of pressures. A mentally healthy person will have view occasions of stressful situations
which he will meet successfully. Stress is usually thought of in negative terms. It is thought to be caused by something bad. This is a form of distress. Individual can find stress both positive and negative and although a degree of stress can be stimulus, the term in general usage would be used to refer to a negative situation. It states that there are things that can be done to prevent and control work related stress. Teacher stress is a much talked of phenomenon, teacher stress is a real phenomenon and that high level are reliably associated with a range of causal factors.

Factors of Stress

Depending upon the stress factors and the nature of its effects, stresses are commonly classified as physiological stress and psychological stress.

Physiological stress factors involve excess physical loads high and low temperatures, pain stimuli, difficult respiration. Psychological stresses are sub-divided into informational and emotional factors. Informational stress occur in situations involving informational overloads, when a person fails to cope with the problem or is slow in making correct decisions or when his responsibility for the results is high. Emotional stress appears in situations involving threat, danger, and offence.

The effects of stress have been found to be fairly widespread implicating changes in behavior. The most notable are vague aches and
pains, disturbed sleep, apprehension and anxiety along with mild forms of depression. Other effects of stress at work are specifically related to the nature of the work being performed. First and foremost are the effects on neuro-physiological functions. While there is widespread awareness of gastrointestinal and cardio-vascular effects of stress, locomotors functioning is also affected (Rice, 2004). When individuals in an organization experience stress they adopt some ways of dealing with it. Individuals and even organizations cannot remain a continuous state of tension.

Models of Stress

Models are validated theories. They present a holistic picture of the phenomenon under study. Thus the model of stress presents the image of stress phenomenon in totality, the casual factors, the symptoms, the process and the end result. Depending upon the aspects of stress researchers adopt models for analyzing the aspects of stress to understand the stress phenomenon. A brief discussion of a few relevant models of stress is presented below:

1) Stimulus-Based Model of Stress [Beehr and Bhagat (1985); McLean (1979); Selye (1975)]: Stressful stimuli include highly persistent stimulation, fatigue or boredom. In this perspective stress has been treated as an independent variable. The common features of stressful stimuli are
undesirable, unpleasant, uncomfortable, threatening and demanding. These stimuli causing stressful situations may be called ‘stressors’ instead of ‘stress’.


3) **Systems Model of Stress** [Lumsden (1975)]: It was proposed by Lumsden (1975). It considers all the salient features of different models and calls for a system analysis of stress. Stressors, appraisal and coping are related to each other and occur in cyclical fashion. When the stressor acts upon the person, the process of appraisal begins followed by coping process.

1.2 **Stress Management**

The term “stress management” or “coping” have been used to synonymously to denote the way of dealing stress or the effort to “master” conditions of harm, threat, or challenge caused by stress. In its broadest sense, stress management refers to any attempt to dealt with stressful situations that the persons or organizations feel need to be tackled.
Stress management is a means to enhance coping with external stressors and their internal consequences. Stress management has three broad options – prevent or control, escape from it or learn to adapt to it. Effective stress management can be done at the individual level and at the organizational level in many different ways. Stress management can be divided into two phases: the first is coping with stress and the second is counteracting the stress with the help of relaxation response.

**Preventive Stress Management**

Preventive Stress Management has three stages: primary, secondary and tertiary.

1) **Primary Prevention** is intended to reduce, modify or eliminate the stressors. It is largely an organizational matter as it can change and shape the demands it places on people at work.

2) **Secondary Prevention** is intended to modify or alter the individual’s or organization’s response to stressor. People must learn to manage the inevitable, unalterable work stressors so as to avert distress and strain while promoting health and well being.

3) **Tertiary Prevention** is intended to heal the individual or organizational symptoms of distress and strain. These Symptoms may range from early warning symptoms such as headaches or absenteeism to more severe forms of distress such as hypertension, work stoppages and
strikes. Tertiary prevention is therapeutic aimed at arresting distress and healing the individual, the organization or both.

1.3 Coping with Stress

Coping is a core concept in stress literature and a variety of coping measures have been used. Individuals and organizations cannot remain in a continuous state of tension. “The term coping is used to devote the way of dealing with stress, or the effort to master the conditions of harm, threat, challenges when a routine or automatic response is not readily available” (Lazarus, 1974).

There are two approaches by which people cope with stress: (i) Passive approach, and (ii) Active approach.

1. Passive approach: When people either suffer or deny the experienced stress or put the blame on others it is called passive approach.

2. Active approach: It occurs when people face the experienced realities of stress and clarify the problems through negotiations and discussions with other members.

There are basically two ways to manage stress:

a) At individual level

b) At organizational level.
At individual level, again there are two ways of dealing with stress:

1. By drug therapy

2. By non drug treatment

In Drug therapy, individuals use drugs continuously to cope with stress related ailments such as headaches, backaches. In non-drug treatment the coping is more advantageous and much safer, for example exercise, yoga relaxation response, such as acupuncture, meditation, hobby, practice relaxation techniques, rearrange schedules.

Tubesing and Tubesing (1982) have suggested that stress management approaches should cover all aspects of human experience. They have grouped the coping techniques with life stress into four major categories, namely, personal management skills, relationship skills, outlook skills and stamina skills. According to these authors, relaxation skills are important for management of stress. In general, “relaxation skills help one to develop the art of cruising in neutral”. Several relaxation techniques are mentioned by Davis et al. (1980) and Mc Kay et al. (1981). All these techniques bring out the physiological changes in individuals when state of consciousness is altered through non-drug means. Proper use of massage-hot and cold are refreshing and relaxing for counteracting the physical stress response when used with physical exercise.
Beyond all these measures an individual is required to develop a stress management philosophy for his/her own self through a mental approach which includes positive attitude and optimistic outlook. Developing a sense of humour is an excellent means of effective stress management. It is important to listen to our body. “Chronic fatigue, tense muscles, depression and lethargy are some of the symptoms that give the message: It is time to take off the pressure” (Agarwal, 2001).

1.4 Teachers’ Stress

A teacher is a kingpin in the entire system of education. Almost all cultures of the civilized world have held their teachers in a very high esteem. They are very often been given names like ‘Master’, ‘Mentor’ and ‘Guru’. To achieve this status, teachers throughout the history of civilization have come up to the expectations of the world around them.

A nation’s development and the quality of its education programmes are greatly determined by the quality of its teachers. To discharge such a big responsibility, teachers should be free from stress. Seyle(1956), defined stress as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it”. The “demand” can be a threat, a challenge or any kind of change which requires the body to adapt. The response is automatic, immediate. In many ways, teacher’s stress is no different from the stress to anyone else. Teachers get stressed when they feel they are not coping with their
workload or other pressures of their job. Any adjusting demand that requires coping behaviour on the part of the teacher is called “teacher stress”. According to a research the major causes of teacher stress are excessive working hours, excessive workload, rising class sizes, pressures due to changes in curriculum and courses, changes to assessment and testing requirements, poor management, workplace bullying, crumbling school, pupil misbehavior, risk of violence from pupils, parents and intruders, lack of support with bureaucracy, form filling and routine tasks, lack of job security due to redundancy and fixed term contracts, lack of control over the job, threat to early retirement arrangements and lack of public esteem. Evidence from the research efforts on science teacher stress suggests strategies such as meditation and relaxation and engagement in leisure time activates for palliating stress (Betkouski, 1981; Penny, 1982).

1.5 Glimpse of West Jaintia Hills District

West Jaintia Hills District is one of the 11 districts of the State of Meghalaya. With the bifurcation of the erstwhile Jaintia Hills District into East and West Jaintia Hills, West Jaintia Hills District came into existence on 31st July, 2012 with its Headquarters at Jowai. Jowai is the host of all the heads of important government offices and establishments, educational institutions, hospitals and banking institutions.
The total area of the district is 1,693 sq. kms. The district comprises of 1 civil sub-division, i.e. Amlarem Civil Sub-division and 3 Community and Rural Development Blocks; viz. Amlarem Community and Rural Development Block, Laskeiñ Community and Rural Development Block and Thadlaskeiñ Community and Rural Development Block bounded in the north by Assam, in the south by Bangladesh and East Jaintia Hills District, in the East by Assam and in the West by East Khasi Hills District. The district has a population of 2,70,352 of which, 1,34,406 are males and 1,35,946 are females. The density of population is 159.69 per sq.km.

Jowai town is the headquarters of West Jaintia Hills District in Meghalaya and is home to the Pnar tribe. It is well connected by roadways to Shillong which is 60 km. Jowai lies on the National Highway 44 (NH-44) which connects Assam, Tripura, Mizoram and parts of Manipur specifically Lamka (Churachanpur) where the Highway NH-44 is sole link to it. The city of Jowai is a scenic place located on a plateau surrounded on three sides by the Myntdu River bordering Bangladesh to the south about 50 km. form the Indo-Bangladesh border.

The locale of the study was restricted to Jowai town of West Jaintia Hills district, Meghalaya. It is known as the educational centre of the Jaintia Hills and important educational institutions of the entire parts of the Jaintia Hills are located within Jowai town. It has 3 government schools, 3
deficit schools, 10 private schools, and a good number of adhoc schools and 1 government college and 1 Polytechnic College catering to students from all over the Jaintia hills. The literacy rate of Jowai 76% and the population percentage of males to females is 49% to 51% according to 2001 census.

1.6 Need and Importance

It goes without reiteration that better coping and better management by teachers with stressful situation on the job can lead to better quality and greater efficiency. At work, however, acknowledging stress is considered the same as admitting incompetence. Thus teacher with high stress may not be able to handle their responsibilities in a competent way. In order to equip teachers with proximal transaction skills, it is necessary to downsize the stressful situations through stress management. Teachers need to cope up with stress and by which they can regulate the external and internal stressors through efficient coping techniques. Such knowledge would have immediate applications for teachers thereby empowering them to cope better with stressful situation at school.

A teacher’s task is involved not only in teaching-learning process but also in learning-teaching process to make the teaching-learning process effective in real sense. A teacher’s life is adversely affected by stress as it lowers his ability to function effectively.
This study was necessitated by a general lack of knowledge about teacher stress and stress management in general and stress and its management by secondary school teachers of Jowai town in particular. Teachers under the deficit system are stressed because of late payments of salaries; whereas private and government aided teachers are stressed because of low salaries, excessive work load, rising class sizes, poor management and pupil misbehaviour. In government schools, however, though the position of teachers regarding late payment of salaries is negligible, they are stressed because of poor relationship with the management; few of them because of the distance from home and having to stay in headquarters. The study was conducted on secondary school teachers of Jowai town to explore the levels of stress management. It also explored coping strategies or stress management behaviour adapted by them and actions that should be taken to reduce teacher stress. The increased understanding of the stress and the levels of stress management, adapted stress management behaviour and the actions to reduce stress would hopefully make a significant contribution to the knowledge of teachers’ stress not only in Jowai particularly but also in other parts of our state, Meghalaya.

Therefore, in order to fill this gap, this study on stress management is needed.
1.7 Statement of the Problem

Teachers’ stress is a real phenomenon and is very much talked of. The phenomenon is reliably associated with a range of causal factors including those intrinsic to teaching, individual vulnerability and systematic influences. The direct effects in the initial states are anxiety and depression. If the situation does not improve, teachers get physical symptoms and start going off sick. Therefore, in order to reduce stress there is a need for awareness on its management through various stress management behaviours. Based on the need and justification of the study the statement of the problem can be stated as A Study of Stress Management by Secondary School Teachers of Jowai Town.

1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

**Stress:** Stress is considered as an involuntary response to a dangerous situation. When we face a situation which our brain is incapable of handling, it puts the body on alert by producing hormones which are required in fight or flight situation (Owais Siddiqui: Teacher’s Stress.mht).

**Stress Management and Coping:** The terms ‘stress management’ and ‘stress coping’ are used interchangeably in this study to denote cognitive, affective and behavioural measures reported by the individual as preferred by them in dealing with specific stressful situations on the job or with job stress in general (Nalini Juneja: How Principals Manage Stress).
Secondary School Teachers: Secondary school teachers are those teachers teaching at the secondary levels that is classes IX and X. In this study the secondary school teachers include both male and female teachers teaching in Class IX and Class X of Jowai secondary schools.

1.9 Objectives of the Study

1) To find out the stress management level of secondary school teachers of Jowai town.

2) To find out the stress management level in relation to:
   a) Gender
   b) Age
   c) Teaching Experience

3) To find out the stress management behavior between male and female teachers.

1.10 Hypothesis of the Study

1. There is no significant difference between stress management level and gender;

2. There is no significant difference between stress management level and age;

3. There is no significant difference between stress management level and teaching experience;
4. There is no significant difference between stress management behaviour and gender.

1.11 Delimitation of the Study

The study is delimited to the secondary school teachers of Jowai.