1.1 INTRODUCTION

Stress is considered an integral part of modern life. It is the psychological or physiological reaction that occurs when an individual perceives an imbalance between the level of demand placed upon him and his capability for meeting that demand. Many environmental situations can cause stress. Conditions that cause stress are called stressors or loads. Stressors can be defined as the causes of stress, including any environmental conditions that place a physical or emotional demand on the individual. Stress emanates from a misfit between environmental demands and personal adequacies to meet these demands. Today’s life is so busy and complex. Everyone is in a hurry to utilize the most of their time by engaging in some productive work and to compete with the world in all regards. The constant strive to be the best at workplace, pressure of meeting deadlines at job, conservative company policies, group and political pressures at work, the complex lifestyle, increasing price level, increase in tax pays, stringent government policies, etc are contributing towards employee stress at job.

Employees in both public and private sector experience stress and respond in different ways. The work culture of public and private sector is different in regard to time of work, nature of work, scale of pay, company policies, degree of supervision, leadership etc. (Motowidlo, Packard & Manning 1986)\(^1\) have classified the causes of stress into two broad categories: organizational stressors and life stressors. (Pestonjee 1987)\(^2\) has classified three important sources where stress emanates from. These are job and organizational; social sector and intrapsychic sector. Environmental factors do have impact on employee stress. The environmental factors to which an employee responds mainly includes fast technological change, family demands and obligations; economic and financial conditions, race, caste, class, ethnic identity and relocation and transfers (Pestonjee 1983)\(^3\). Of late, the phenomenal rate of social and technical change also had its great impact on people’s lifestyle which is carried over into their jobs.
The physical environmental conditions, such as excessive noise, poor lightning, safety hazards, poorly designed office space, lack of privacy, and poor air quality also cause stress. (Evans and Johnson 2000)\(^4\) observed that clerical employees experience significantly higher stress levels in noisy open offices than in quiet areas. (Kivinaki et al. 2000)\(^5\) concluded that the percentage of employees suffering from high blood pressure doubled after the company laid off ten percent of its work force. (Pattanayak 2000)\(^6\) observed that the level of stress does not vary much across the positions. There is not much significant difference in the level of stress experienced by the executives and the supervisors. Stress can manifest itself in both a positive and a negative way. Stress is said to be positive when the situation offers an opportunity for one to gain something. Eustress is the term used to describe positive stress. Eustress is often viewed as a motivator since in its absence the individual lacks the edge necessary for peak performance. It is the fuel that drives beyond the commonplace. Without any stress, life would be reduced to the level of a grazing animal with everything supplied.

But stress becomes negative when it is associated with heart disease, alcoholism, drug abuse, marital breakdowns, absenteeism, child abuse and a host of other social, physical, organizational and emotional problems. Stress affects individuals physiologically, emotionally and behaviorally and it is linked to several health problems. Stress at workplace has become an important topic of study of organizational behaviour. Researchers in the area of organizational psychology and management have used the term occupational stress to denote employees’ mental state aroused by a job situation or a combination of job situations perceived as presenting excessive and divergent demands. If controlled, stress is that which strengthens behaviour. If handled poorly, it acts otherwise which can cause diseases like high blood pressure, ulcer, asthma and overactive thyroid. Occupational stress is dealt by all in different ways. For example, some become upset, tensed, resulting in absenteeism and turnover while some take it positively and view it as a challenge to overcome. Infact, personal characteristics of the
employee and his cognitive appraisal of the job factors in the framework of his capacity and resources determine the extent of stress he would experience from a job factor or situation. That is the reason any work setting variable cannot be generalized as a universal job stressor. However, factors like excessive workload, pressure of meeting deadlines, achieving certain targets and work standards are common phenomena related to an occupation and can be regarded as stressors. There are other factors also which determine stress like income, age, nature of work, type of organization, personality type, etc. (Landy and Trumbo 1976⁷; Srivastava and Veena 2009)⁸.

There are both eustress and distress that come from work and non-work lives. Work and non-work domains of one’s life are closely interrelated. If one experiences much distress at work, that stress will be carried over to home which will increase the sense of awareness of even small distresses experienced in a family sphere. Likewise, stresses experienced at home or with friends or from non-work situations can be carried over to the work place which might heighten and multiply the stresses experienced at work.

Although the area of occupational stress is psychology oriented, an effort is made to relate it to commerce. Occupational stress has been studied among the managers who are the leaders in growth and development to a company and organization. The managers take full responsibility and accountability for performance of their subordinates, conducts interviews, training sessions, plans compensation packages, evaluation systems, sales quotas, sales territories, motivates employees and the like. In the process they endure severe stress which may emanate from multiple causes like stiff competition, globalization, pressure of meeting deadlines at work, downsizing, increased price level, increase in tax pays, changing government policies etc. Moreover, nature and intensity of stress differ across organizational sectors. Therefore, four public sector and five private sector organizations dealing in various fields of activities have been selected to
identify different factors leading to stress building among employees. Insurance, banking, electronics and FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) sectors have been covered in private sector sample selection process. Banks, manufacturing concern, telecom and public utility organizations constitute the public sector. Earlier public offices and industries were considered to be sick and non-profit making. But the recent picture of functioning of public sector organizations has completely changed. Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and India Post are glorifying examples in public sector which transformed into potential revenue generating organizations for government. One psychological scale (Occupational Stress Index developed by Srivastava and Singh 1981)\(^9\) has been used in the study to assess occupational stress and quantify the findings.

**1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The present study is an attempt to explore the psychological aspects like thoughts, feelings and behaviour of employees as a consequence to job stress or occupational stress in private and public sector undertakings. Few researches have been conducted comparing stress between male and female employees (Gaur and Dhawan 2000)\(^{10}\) and between public and private sector employees (Mishra, Bharadwaj & Mishra 1999)\(^{11}\). It was observed that alienation and organizational frustration was high in private sectors managers as compared to public sector managers. The opposite trend was observed by (Mohan and Chauhan 1999)\(^{12}\) for middle level managers. The study reported that public sector employees were more stressed than private sector employees and they perceived the work culture as supportive. Stress is inevitable in life. It may be caused by multiple factors like nature of work, work relations (Payne 1980)\(^{13}\), lack of time (Hall and Lawler 1971)\(^{14}\), family problems (Davidson and Cooper 1983)\(^{15}\), personal strained
relationship (Quick and Quick 1979)\(^{16}\) personality type (Srivastava and Veena 2009)\(^{8}\) less job involvement (Ahmed and Khanna 1992)\(^{17}\), job dissatisfaction (Chaudhary 1990)\(^{18}\), non-commitment to organization (Pattanayak, Panda and Mohapatra 1999)\(^{19}\) and so on. But the same set of factors may not be perceived as stressful to all. Stressors are subjective varying from person to person. That is the reason any work setting variable cannot be generalized as an universal job stressor. However, factors like work overload (Cooper and Marshall 1976)\(^{20}\); role ambiguity (Kahn and Quinn 1970)\(^{21}\), role conflict (Kahn et al. 1964)\(^{22}\), company policy, slow promotion, leave etc are regarded as universal work stressors. Stress has many adverse effects like poor mental health and lower esteem (Baran, Rehman and Sen 1999)\(^{23}\) absenteeism and turnover (Crouter 1984)\(^{24}\), frustration and depression (Schuler 1984)\(^{25}\) etc. At the same time, some amount of stress is necessary for successful and timely completion of work. Positive stress, known as eustress provides an impetus to work at a speed and instill motivation and a competitive spirit in an individual (Hinkle 1973)\(^{26}\). Occupational stress has been related to job satisfaction (Beegam and Dharmangadan 2000)\(^{27}\), job performance (McGrath 1976\(^{28}\); Beehr and Newman 1958\(^{29}\)), age, nature of organization and others. But very few or hardly couple of studies have been reported relating stress to employees drawing different amount of incomes in organizations. The present study aims at identifying and comparing stress of male and female employees in both public and private sectors belonging to two different income groups.

Therefore, the following objectives are framed for the research-

1. To study the various factors which lead to occupational stress in public and private sector enterprises.

2. To study the existence and extent of occupational stress of employees in public and private sector.

3. To identify different stress levels between male and female employees.
4. To compare the occupational stress of employees in context of their income levels.

5. To study the physical and behavioural consequences of stress on the employees.

The first objective of the study has been achieved through knowledge gathered from books, literary works, journals and personal interaction with employees. However, the second, third and fourth objectives of the study have been fulfilled through distribution of Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed by (Srivastava and Singh 1981) among the respondents. The total score of the individual questionnaire indicate whether employees are low stressed, moderately stressed and highly stressed. As per the OSI, scores in between 46-127 indicate low stress; scores in between 128-150 indicate moderate stress and scores more than 150 indicate high stress. As regard to the fifth objective, it is achieved through hospital visits. Information on physical consequences of stress has been released by psychiatrists practicing in different hospitals and private chambers in Assam and inputs on behavioural consequences of stress are provided by some clinical psychologists. Moreover, conclusions and inferences are also drawn on the basis of knowledge gathered through books and other secondary works.

1.3 HYPOTHESES

Numerous researches have been conducted in occupational stress and some of the important relevant researches have been cited in review of literature. In view of the above objectives, relevant psychological tests have been adopted in the present investigation and the following hypotheses are formulated.
H1: There is no difference in the stress level of employees in public and private sector organizations.

H2: No difference exists in the stress level of male and female employees in public and private sector organizations.

H3: No difference exists in the stress level of male and female employees in public sector organizations.

H4: There is no difference in the stress level of male and female employees in private sector organizations.

H5: Discrepancies do not exist in the stress level of employees in public and private sector among low and high income groups.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the study aims at identifying the stress differentials between male and female employees in public sector and private sector organizations among low and high income groups, few select organizations have been taken as sample for distribution of questionnaires. Questionnaires were distributed only to managerial cadres. Prior permission and appointment was taken from such organizations. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed each to public and private sector organizations by using judgemental sampling technique. But only 160 valid responses were received from public sector employees and 167 were received from private sector. So deliberately 7 filled questionnaires were dropped to facilitate logical comparison between 160 public sector versus 160 private sector employees.
Table 1.1 presents the pattern of sample constitution. The study investigates the extent of occupational stress in male and female employees among two major organizational service sectors within Guwahati city. Further, the impact of income difference on stress building among employees has been identified and studied. 2x2x2 factorial design is adopted for this purpose. The sample consists of three independent variables namely, sector, gender and income. A self developed demographic schedule is administered on participants to collect primary data of the respondents.

Questionnaires are distributed only among managers by judgement and interaction. High income group includes employees drawing a salary of Rs 50,000/- or more in their respective organizations. Low income group consists of employees drawing a salary of less than Rs 50,000 but more than Rs 25,000. This information has been collected from respective departmental and organizational heads. As wage and salary structure of employees differ across organizations so consent and approval has been taken from appropriate authority of these organizations to confirm whether correspondence is made and questionnaires are distributed only among managerial staff.
Among 160 public and private sector employees, 80 consist of male employees and 80 consists of female employees for comparison of stress. The male and female employees have been divided equally in two income groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLIC SECTOR (N=160)</th>
<th>PRIVATE SECTOR (N=160)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India Post (N=40)</td>
<td>BSNL (N=40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Bank of India (N=40)</td>
<td>N=P.M (N=40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bharati Axa (N=30)</td>
<td>ICICI Prudential (N=30)</td>
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<td>ICICI Bank (N=40)</td>
<td>Crompton Greaves (N=30)</td>
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<td>Crystal Brook (N=30)</td>
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Table 1.2 shows the pattern of distribution of questionnaires among the nine sample organizations selected for the purpose. Out of nine organizations, four belong to public sector and five belong to private sector.

Out of 320 employees 160 are drawn from public sector {India Post (40), BSNL (40), Union Bank of India (40) and Nagaon Paper Mill (40)} and 160 from private sector across five organizations {Bharti Axa Life Insurance (30), ICICI Prudential (30), Crompton Greaves (30), Crystal Brook (30) and ICICI bank (40)} situated in Guwahati city. All the respondents are educationally well qualified. 20% are graduates, 44% are professionally qualified, 21% are post graduates and 15% are technically qualified. Of the total 320 respondents, 21% are identified as young people (upto 35 years), 37.5 % are early middle age (36-45 years) and 41.5% as late middle age (45-60 years). Information on demographic aspects of respondents has been collected from demographic schedule administered on them. All the respondents completed Occupational Stress Index (Srivastava and Singh 1981)¹⁰
distributed to them which is used for assessing stress level of employees in international level.

Two sampling techniques are adopted in two stages in the study. In the initial stage, judgemental sampling technique is adopted. Since the study concentrates on measuring occupational stress of managerial personnel, the respondents (mid and top level career professionals) are drawn from public and private sectors by using judgemental sampling technique. Moreover, equal numbers of male, female, public sector and private sector employees of two different income groups constitute the sample. So, questionnaires are purposefully administered on those employees who fulfill the criteria of constituting the sample.

In the second stage, convenience sampling has been adopted. This is done because very few valid responses could have been collected from private sector female employees in two income groups. So, these nine sample organizations are selected as per convenience of the investigator.

The study consists of primary data with some inputs also from secondary sources. Primary data consist of Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed by (Srivastava and Singh 1981), demographic schedule, personal interactions with managerial executives of public and private sector companies, hospital visits to meet select psychiatrists and psychologists etc. to gather important information pertaining to research area. Exploratory research design is adopted in the study. It attempts to study the stress level of male and female employees in public and private sectors under two income groups.

Statistical tools like mean, standard deviation, t-test are applied to calculate the scores of stress on the Occupational Stress Index. These quantitative tools are used and with their results inferences are drawn. Further, bar diagrams and pie-charts have been used for analysis.
A well developed and widely used Occupational Stress Index (OSI) scale, tested in Indian context (Srivastava and Singh 1981) is chosen to measure the occupational stress of the sample. This scale was used by (Chandraiah et al. 2003) in their study ‘Occupational stress and job satisfaction among managers’ and it was observed that age variable was negatively correlated with occupational stress and positively with job satisfaction. In another study (Dhamodharan and Arumugasamy 2012) administered the Occupational Stress Index developed by (Srivastava and Singh 1981) on a sample of 388 executives and observed that there is no correlation between occupational stress and executives’ six leadership styles. (Sarikwal and Kumar 2010) in their research work ‘An international study of work stress with types of workers’ administered the Occupational Stress Index (by Srivastava and Singh 1981) on 360 skilled and unskilled workers to examine the incidence of work stress in reference to the problems that arise due to the interaction of work stress with type of workers. It was observed that significant difference exist among skilled and unskilled workers.

About the scale: The Occupational Stress Index purports to measure the extent of stress which employees perceive from various job constituents and conditions of their job. The tool may conveniently be administered to different employees operating in context of industries or other non-production organizations. The scale consists of 46 items, each to be rated on the five point scale. Out of 46 items 28 are ‘True – Keyed’ and last 18 are ‘False – Keyed’. The items relate to almost all relevant components of the job size which cause stress in some way or the other, such as, role over-load, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic, impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability.
Table IV placed in the annexure gives an account of the items constituting various sub-scales of the Occupational Stress Index (OSI).

Reliability and validity of the OSI scale has also been proved and placed in the annexure-V.

1.5 SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The modern world, which is said to be a world of achievements, is also a world of stress. Stress and anxiety have become pervading features of people’s life in modern work life. Despite tremendous achievements in science and technology and remarkable growth of the economy, majority of people all over the world seem to be experiencing moderate to high degree of psychological stress in various spheres of their lives. Thus it is not surprising that interest in the issue has been rising with the advancement of the present century which has been called the “Age of Anxiety and Stress”.

The topic of the research is “Occupational Stress among Managers- A Comparative Study between Public Sector and Private Sector Enterprises”

Occupational stress is a common problem for all employees be it male, female, public sector or private sector. Stress can both be a stimulant to growth and development and a major factor in the etiology of a variety of physical and emotional disorders. Therefore, the nature of stress and the complex psychological mechanisms that mediate adaptation to stressful environments have become the subject of intensive scientific enquiry. Stress is an inevitable part of a job. It is impossible to make the work environment entirely free from all sorts of stress. Some existing stressors can be eliminated and the frequency as well as the severity of the job stressors can be mitigated to some extent by putting into effect various corrective interventions by the management as well as by individual
employees. It is very important to understand the root causes of stress in job and save from its harmful effects. The present study focuses on occupational stress and various causes leading to stress building among the employees. Moreover, the differences in display of behaviour, attitude and health impacts among male and female managers as a result of stress if any, is highlighted. As stress is experienced by every individual in general, this study will benefit the executives and organizations to retrospect and rethink on their functions and effectively deal with such complex stressful situations. This will not only contribute towards organizational development but also lead to a better society in the long run. This is a very dynamic subject which demands extensive study. Numerous researches have been conducted so far on stress management and its consequences but hardly any research has been revealed comparing stress income wise. So a sincere attempt has been taken up to fill up the existing gap in the literature on the subject matter. Moreover, the research aims at creating new stock of knowledge.

1.6 PERIODICITY

The Study covers the period from June, 2009 to December, 2011.

1.7 LIMITATIONS

- The study is limited to only a few organizations of public sector and private sector. Stress is depicted and results are drawn on the basis of responses collected from 320 employees in Guwahati city only.

- The study is limited to the time period from June 2009 to December 2011.
The nature of study is psychological. Many a times, the executives do not express the level of stress or partially reveal the stress experienced by them at job place. This is a serious limitation of the study.

Lack of active cooperation from the employees while distributing questionnaires. Many of the questionnaires were not returned and some were received either blank or half filled in.
REFERENCES


