2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

There are numerous studies in the area of stress. In general sense, stress is the pressure feel in life due to their reaction to situation. (Selye 1956) defines stress as an adoptive response to the external situation that results in physical, psychological or behavioural deviation for organizational participants. He observed stress as the spice of life and absence of stress is death. According to (Beehr and Newman 1978) stress is a condition arising from interaction of people and their jobs and characterised by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning. This aspect of stress is called distress.

There is also a positive side of stress, called eustress. Eustress refers to the healthy, positive, constructive outcome of stressful events and the stress response. Eustress activates and motivates people to achieve their goals and succeed in their life’s challenges. This means people need some stress to survive.

Stress also manifests in various forms of emotional disorders. (Singh and Singh 1992) found that stress gets its reflection in the form of anxiety, depression, helplessness, hopelessness and anger. The stressful people with the slightest provocation are easily induced to anger and anxiety and become unable to relax. In his study, (Dua 1994) reported that the employees suffering from occupational stress generally tend to have low psychological commitment to the organization. (Kivinaki et al. 2000) found that the percentage of employees suffering from high blood pressure doubled after the company laid off ten percent of its workforce. (Pattnayak 2000) observed that the level of stress experienced does not vary much across the positions. There is not much significant difference between stress experienced by the executives and the supervisor. Employees’ responses to work demands and pressures are largely influenced by their personality characteristics, and psychological and behavioural patterns, such as beliefs and values, aspiration and expectancy, need structure, attributions, locus of control, personality traits, coping skills, cognitive patterns, etc. An important personal characteristic which
influence the experience of stress is “sense of control.” Control refers to the perception by the individual worker that his or her action results in expected outcomes, particularly those which are important for the workers. Sense of control has been found to have significant effect on people’s response to stress.

In a study (Srivastava & Veena 2009), on a sample of industrial supervisors noted that supervisors rating higher on emotionality, dependence and sensitivity and imaginativeness experienced comparatively higher degree of occupational stress. High anxiety also is a frequent source as well as promoter of stress. Indicating the relationship of anxiety to stress, (Speilberger 1979) has stated that in a transaction between person and environment stressors are linked to anxiety reactions by perception of threat. Trait anxiety plays prominent role in the experience of stress and reactions to it. Trait anxiety is an abiding predisposition and is a relatively stable characteristic which influence individual’s behaviour to a great extent. In a number of studies, external locus of control has been reported to be associated with higher degree of stress and anxiety. In a study among a sample of banking personnel, (Srivastava and Krishna 1991) noted that employees with external locus of control experience comparatively higher degree of occupational stress and lower job satisfaction. Another study on male bankers reported that external locus of control was correlated with role related stressing their role expectations, role overload and role ambiguity facets ((Mallik and Sabharwal 1999).

(Gupta 1999) noted that employees attributing to their efforts, nature of job activities, work conditions and managerial policy for their success and failures in job life experienced higher role stress as compared to those who attributed to chance or luck for their achievements and failures at work.

Certain behavioural patterns become direct source of stress. Type A behavioural patterns such as drive to achieve more and more, aggressive striving, high competitiveness, high hostility, hyper alertness, rapid pace in themselves cause
stress and become risk factors in certain somatic problems, particularly coronary heart disease. “Type A behavioural patterns” (Friedman & Rosenman 1974) are the examples of such behavioural sources of occupational stress. (Pandey 1998) studied the relationship between personality dimensions and organizational role stress in a public sector organization. 

There were no differences in the role stress of middle level managers, lower level managers and supervisors. (Dwivedi 1997) observed that perceived role stress was negatively associated with trust and positively associated with distrust among executives working in private and public sector organizations. Researchers have applied “role theory” to understand stress problems at work and to examine how role pressures contribute to occupational stress. (Ivancevich and Matteson 1980) noted that role pressure occurs when an employee’s expectations or demands conflict with expectations and demands of the organization. (Kahn and his associates 1964) have extensively investigated and discussed the stress arising from two major characteristics of organizational roles, i.e., role ambiguity and role conflict (inter-sender, intra-sender, inter-role and person-role conflicts). (Chand and Sethi 1997) have found significant positive relationship between job related strain and role overload and role conflict.

The quality of interpersonal relationship at work plays a dominant role in determining employees’ job behaviour and job strains. It has been consistently linked to job stress. (Payne 1980). (Kets de Vries 1984) reported that at least three types of interpersonal relationships have been studied, viz., relationship with co-workers, relationship within work groups and relationship with supervisors and superiors. As the social support from the co-workers and work groups, and supervisors buffers the job stress and consequent strains, the poor or strained interpersonal relationships at work is associated with the feeling of threat for the employees. Poor co-worker relationships are associated with low trust, supportiveness and interest or willingness to listen (French and Caplan 1973). Another potentially stressful relationship within the workplace is observed is in
interactions with customers or clients. These relationships often present a primary focus on the work an employee does.

One group of employees who have been identified as being at risk for experiencing job stress are those who are involved in providing service to others (Schuler 1984)\(^21\). For example, the medical personnel having more contact with patients report high level of emotional exhaustion (Maslach & Jackson 1981)\(^22\).

Besides the role and job characteristics, certain features of the structure, climate and culture of the organization also cause severe psychological stress to its members. The extent to which individual employees are involved in direction and decision making in their work leads to the definition of two kinds of organizational structures: centralized (tall organization) and decentralized (flat organization). It is generally observed that the structure which allows employees more decision making power produces less stress. (Ivancevich and Donnelly 1975)\(^23\) in their study noted that employees in flat organization reported less job stress and more job satisfaction. These differential effects might be linked to the fact that decision making enhances the meaningfulness an employee finds in work and provide the employees with a greater sense of autonomy, responsibility, certainty, control and ownership (Schuler 1980\(^24\); Cooper 1987\(^25\)).

An important aspect that results from organizational culture is the existence of competition. For instance, as organizations decline, especially in relation to downsizing and budget cut, five job stressors emerge, namely, feeling of job insecurity, work overload because of unrealistic deadlines, underutilization of employees’ skills, promotional obstacles and inter and intra group competitions (Jick 1985)\(^26\). Many workers feel stress due to power struggles or office politics prevailing in the organization. Managers who are engaged in power games and political alliances can place stressful expectations and demands on subordinates (Matteson and Ivancevich 1987)\(^27\).

Apart from physical consequences, stress produces various psychological consequences also. (Lele 1993)\(^28\) observed that job dissatisfaction, moodiness,
depression, anger, anxiety, nervousness, irritability and tension are the manifestations of the psychological consequences of stress. Job burnout is however not similar to stress. Some contend that burnout is type of stress itself. (Maslach 1982) described burnout as the process of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment resulting from prolonged exposure to stress. In a study (Srivastava 1990) found that inadequate organizational climate was positively correlated with the symptoms of mental ill-health among its employees.

Another factor of organizational climate which might cause stress to its employees involves territory or personal space. Organizational territory is defined as the personal space or area of activities within which an employee works. Organizations in the global market place are continuously changing. These consistent changes in organizational structure and its functioning are the results of advancements in technology, economic constraints and rational competitions. The organizational change occur when the company alters the way it does business, such as computerizing the processes or entering a new market or product line. In the environment of organizational changes, the employees are being required to adapt to the changes in order to accommodate or facilitate the needs of the organization (Lawler 1994). In a changing environment, employees are in a consistent state of slush, uncertainty and insecurity which lead to occupational stress. (Johnson and Sarason 1979) have argued that change, depending on how it is perceived is one of the primary causes of stress and organizational stress can be extremely stressful due to the feeling of insecurity it evokes. However, the relationship between organizational change and employees’ stress has not been extensively investigated. In an article, (Mack, Nelson and Quick 1998) observed that the impact of organizational change is an individual phenomenon. Individual’s psychological, cognitive and perceptual process play an important role in mediating the experience of and reactions to the stress of organizational change.
established that stress was found to be influenced by age, general ability and personality factors among 200 male executives. Age was positively correlated with stress among 80 executives (Beena and Poduval 1991). McGrath 1976 has suggested the following six sources of occupational stress.

(a) Task-based stress (difficulty, ambiguity, load, etc.), (b) Role-based stress (conflict, ambiguity, load, etc.) (c) Stress intrinsic to behaviour setting (e.g., effect of crowding or under manning etc.). (d) Stress arising from the physical environment itself (e.g., extreme hot/cold, hostile forces etc). (e) Stress arising from social environment in sense of interpersonal relations (e.g., interpersonal disagreement, privacy, isolation etc.) (f) Stress within the person system, which the focal person brings with him to the situation (e.g., anxiety, perceptual style, motivation, experience etc.).

Landy and Trumbo 1976 have reported job insecurity, excessive competition, hazardous working conditions, task demands and large or unusual working hours as major sources of job stress. Factors intrinsic to the job, i.e., paced-repetitive work, lack of opportunities to use valued skills and abilities, and high costs and penalties for mistakes have been indicated as stressors in the work setting. Time constraint (Hall and Lawler 1971), heavy workload (Buck 1972) excessive and inconvenient work hours (Mott 1972) have also been reported as sources of job stress. (Quick and Quick 1979) have emphasized the role of interpersonal factors in creating stress at work.

Conflict between individuals because of incompatible goals or substantive issues on the one hand and emotional issues on the other create stress. (Parasuraman and Alluto 1981) proposed an integrated model for investigating simultaneously the relationship of contextual, task and role related variables to stressors, viz., inter-unit conflict, technical problems, efficiency problems role frustrations, staff shortage, and too many meetings in the work environment. They reported that situations were not in themselves stressful, but that they may be capable of
producing psychological stress and strain, depending on personal attributes and other co-existing factors. (Srivastava and Singh 1981)\textsuperscript{44} identified twelve factors which cause occupational stress, such as: role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group pressures, low profitability, under participation, low status, and responsibility for people, intrinsic impoverishment, strenuous work condition, poor peer relations and powerlessness.

Besides the stressors prevailing in work setting, a number of non-work or off the job factors are the indirect sources of occupational stress. Models of work-non-work stress (Bhagat et al. 1985)\textsuperscript{45} posit that total amount of stress and strain experienced by a person is a function of both work and non-work stressors. The stresses and strains of non-work life domains influence cognitive evaluations of and reactions to the stresses of job life. (Greenhaus and Parasuram 1987)\textsuperscript{46} have demonstrated that non-work stresses influence and intensify the occupational stress in three ways: (i) additive effect of non-work stressor; (ii) spillover effect of non-work stresses and strains; (iii) interactive effect of work-non-work conflict. However, despite the inclusion of non-work factors as potential stressors in some models of work stress (Cooper and Marshall 1976)\textsuperscript{47}, only a few empirical studies have investigated the relationship of non-work stressors to job stress and other job related strains. (Hendrix et al. 1985)\textsuperscript{48} found that family relationship had indirect effects on job stress through their impact on life stress. (Ahmed and Khanna 1992)\textsuperscript{49} established that job stress was negatively correlated with job involvement among 50 middle level hotel managers. Perceived stress was found to be also negatively correlated with job satisfaction among bankers (Chaudhary 1990)\textsuperscript{50}. (Desai 1993)\textsuperscript{51} identified the differential response profiles of three levels of management on measures of stress and mental workload. The relationship between stress and mental workload was also examined. Upper and middle levels of management experienced higher stress and mental workload as compared to lower level managers. (Crouter 1984)\textsuperscript{52} in a study noted that female
employees with young children were “at risk” and experienced negative spillover from family responsibility to work, as reflected tardiness and absenteeism, inattention and efficiency, and inability to accept new responsibilities at work. (Davidson and Cooper 1988)\textsuperscript{53} reported work-family interface to be a major source of stress for female managers and professionals. In a study, (Srivastava and Krishna 1992)\textsuperscript{54} observed that females in “dual career couples” with part-time jobs experienced lesser role stress and maintained better mental health as compared to those who were in full time employment. Disturbed life patterns of miscellaneous stress (Neves 1969)\textsuperscript{55}, stressful life events (Dohrenwend and Dohrenwend 1974)\textsuperscript{56} and demands of the husband and the children of working women (Waldron 1978)\textsuperscript{57} have been reported as off-the-job sources of occupational stress. (Kumar and Murthy 1998)\textsuperscript{58} observed that the most frequently experienced stressors among women managers were office politics, followed by conflict between work and home, commuting to the work place, lack of opportunity and challenge at the workplace and problems relating to child care. The major strains experienced by the women managers were anxiety, tension and fatigue, lack of concentration, irritation and physical health problems. Further the most frequently used coping strategies were talking with spouse/ friends/ parents/ supervisors/ colleagues about the problem, followed by efforts to increase knowledge/information, physical withdrawal from the situation for a while, pursuing socio-cultural religious activities and doing physical exercise/yoga/meditation. (Gaur and Dhawan 2000)\textsuperscript{59} noted that women professionals used active coping stance, playfulness and initiative as adaptive patterns in the work place. (Aditya and Sen 1993)\textsuperscript{60} concluded that women cope with stress better than their male counterparts. The reason attributed to it is women are more likely to seek emotional support from others in stressful situations, whereas men try either to change the stressor or use less effective coping strategy.
(Walshok 1981)\textsuperscript{61} examined the sex difference in the degree of the negative relationship between job stress and satisfaction. The results indicated that women and men showed quite different levels of job satisfaction for the same jobs. (Tyagi and Sen 2000)\textsuperscript{62} found that female managers were more stressed than male managers and supervisors were more stressed than executives irrespective of gender. Male engineers experienced more stress than female managers (Deosthalee 2000)\textsuperscript{63}. (Chattopadhyay and Dasgupta 1999)\textsuperscript{64} did not find any significant differences in the perceived role stress among single and married female executives. Employees of nationalized banks reported lesser burnout but higher emotional exhaustion than those of scheduled banks (Tewari 1995)\textsuperscript{65}. In a comparison of personal and professional stressors experienced by Indian and American executives working in banks, textile mills, pharmaceutical, engineering, petrochemical and electrical industries it was found that professional stressors were similar in both the countries. However, personal stressors were different in both countries and Indian executives experienced more personal stressors (Batliwala 1990)\textsuperscript{66}. Similarly, a comparison of Indian and American female clerical employees revealed that the source of stress among American clerks was lack of control/autonomy among Indians it was lack of structure and clarity of task (Narayanan, Menon & Spector 1999)\textsuperscript{67}.

Researches in organizational stress have dominantly focused on emotional, behavioural and health outcomes of the stress experienced at work (Brief et al. 1981)\textsuperscript{68}. Thus it can be concluded that prolonged severe stress, affects the focal person at psychological as well as physiological levels. Various dimensions of job behaviour such as performance, job satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover are also affected by the stresses of job life. Consequences of job stress can be studied under three general categories: physiological, psychological and behavioural symptoms.
Job satisfaction is the common and useful outcome measure of occupational stress. (Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman 1970)\textsuperscript{69} in the sample of managers, engineers and office assistants observed significant negative relationship between roles stress (role conflict and role ambiguity) and job satisfaction. Role conflict was negatively related with satisfaction, pay and promotion, but not with co-workers and work itself. (Caplan, Cobb and French 1975)\textsuperscript{70} reported that stresses arising from underutilization of skills and abilities, low participation in decision making, job insecurity and poor social support from supervisors and co-workers cause dissatisfaction.

(Bedian and Armenakis 1981)\textsuperscript{71} conducted a path analytical study of the consequence of role conflict and role ambiguity. The analysis revealed that though role stress negatively relates to job dissatisfaction, the strength of the relationship lies through the path of interfering variables rather than through a direct relationship (Jagadish 1984)\textsuperscript{72} and negatively co-relate with employees’ job satisfaction. (Mishra, 1998\textsuperscript{73}; Pestonjee 1995\textsuperscript{74}) noted that overall role stress among doctors was moderate. On the measures of role erosion, role stagnation and self-role distance, nurses were found to be more stressed than doctors (Ranilakshmi and Mishra 2001)\textsuperscript{75}. (Mathur 1995)\textsuperscript{76} observed that police personnel reported career development uncertainties, death of colleagues, threat of personal injury, unofficial work as directed by the boss, poor personnel policies, and dangerous work duties as contributing to high stress levels. Like the police personnel, pilots also reported that lack of career growth opportunities, inadequate and unsafe working conditions and lack of management support were the major contributors to the stress experienced by them (Kumar and Kulkarni 1996)\textsuperscript{77}. Interrole distance and resource inadequacy were the dominant contributors to role stress among air traffic controllers (Mishra 1996)\textsuperscript{78}.

It is generally assumed and observed that there exists a negative relationship between stress and performance. But at the same time it has also been reported that very low or no stress also associate with low performance level. (Hinkle
1973) has accordingly suggested that “to be alive is to be under stress.” The best known and most thoroughly documented pattern in stress performance literature is the inverted ‘U’ shaped relationship (Anderson 1976; Keller 1981). The curvilinear relationship between stress and performance can be traced back to the work of (Yerks and Dodson 1908). Their model gained momentum with the development of (Scotts 1966) activation theory of motivation and at present it appears to be the most popular one (Allen, Hill & Greer 1982; Meglino 1997; and Moss 1981).

(Srivastava 1983) explored the relationship between role stress and performance, considering the latter as determinant of former as vice versa. The study revealed that employees mentioning high productivity experienced lesser stress by virtue of their productivity. Similarly, bankers of non-nationalized banks reported higher stress levels as compared to those of non nationalized banks (Aminabhavi & Triveni 2000). All categories of aviation personnel, cabin attendants, engineers and pilots experienced higher stress levels than railway and roadway personnel (Barnes 1992a;b). Majority of the scientist reported moderate to low stress (Savita and Asnani 1998).

A moderate level of stress has been observed among women doctors, bank officers and bureaucrats. Executive were found to be more stressed than physicians especially in the area of role insufficiency (Ghosh 2000). In a recent article, it has been argued that the impact of organizational change is an individual phenomenon. Individual’s psychological, cognitive and perpetual process play an important role in mediating the experience of and reactions to the stress of organizational change. (Chandraiah et al. 2003) in their study ‘Occupational stress and job satisfaction among managers’ observed that age variable was negatively correlated with occupational stress and positively with job satisfaction. In another study (Dhamodharan and Arumugasamy 2012) observed that there is no correlation between occupational stress and executives’ six leadership styles. (Sarikwal and Kumar 2010) examined the incidence of work stress in reference
to the problems that arise due to the interaction of work stress with skilled and unskilled workers. It was observed that significant difference exist among skilled and unskilled workers.

Voluminous research in different areas indicating and relating occupational stress with different attributes suggest that stress among employees at work place may be due to varied reasons. Employee stress may be a reason of personality traits which varies from person to person. It may be due to specific job design factors and environment. Good or bad interpersonal relationship with superiors, subordinates or peers can become a source of stress among employees. Research had already been carried out among male and female employees pertaining to causes and consequences of stress. Job insecurity and long hours of work create anxiety among employees and leads to acute stress. Locus of control is also considered to determine the level of occupational stress among employees. (Pestonjee 1999) suggested stress audit as one of the effective proactive intervention to combat stress. According to him, when an organization decides to have a scientific peep into mental and physical health status of its backbone group (executives), the exercise is called a stress audit. It involves an attempt that organizations make to study, explore and control various types of stresses which the individual executives experience by virtue of their organizational membership. Counseling is yet another proactive strategy to be used by organizations to deal with stress. (Panchananthan 1998) reported that counseling to employees in matters like career planning to provide them clarity in their job roles; in identifying their strengths and weaknesses help them better cope with stress. Dissemination of information to employees on how to face stressors within the organization and outside provides useful for employees in dealing with stress. (Agarwal 1984) shows that striking a fit between worker and his work environment serves as one of the best strategy to manage stress. This congruence can be attained by linking the worker to the job characteristics for high internal
motivation, high quality performance, high work satisfaction, low absenteeism and turnover. 

(Srivastava and Krishna 1997) examined the relationship between approach and avoidance modes of coping and mental health of 300 LIC employees. It was found that employees who predominantly adopted avoidance mode of coping manifested more severe symptoms of neuroticism and anxiety in comparison to those who frequently used approach coping strategies.

(Grover and Sen 1994) observed that managers experienced less job stress as compared to supervisors. Similar results were obtained by (Pattnayak 1993) and (Pattnayak, Panda and Mohapatra 1999) noted that non-executives experienced greater stress compared to executives working in a large public sector steel plant. Another study found that workers perceived greatest role stress as compared to middle managers, whereas top level managers perceived lowest stress (Jha, Mishra and Bharadwaj 1992). (Pant and Bharadwaj 1992) measured executive stress and its correlates among public sector managers across three levels- top, middle and lowest. Top level managers were workaholics, experienced a high degree of stress and had inadequate coping ability. In addition, among middle level managers, organizational commitment was negatively correlated with effective coping and chronic work related stress. Differences were found between occupational stress among public and private sector relations officers. Higher stress was reported by public sector public relations officers (Mishra 1997). Alienation and organizational frustration was high in private sector managers as compared to public sector managers (Mishra, Bharadwaj and Mishra 1999). The opposite trend was observed by (Mohan and Chauhan 1999) for middle level managers. The study reported that public sector managers were more stressed than private sector employees and they perceived the work culture as unsupportive.

Junior level scientists reported greater stress than senior level scientists (Roy 1997). Cabin attendants reported greater role related stress than pilots despite
the fact that pilots were higher on trait anxiety (Barnes 1992a). Railway guards manifested greater anxiety and stress, and lower health status as compared to railway motormen (Barnes 1992b). Stress was found to be negatively correlated with the mental health of supervisors (Mishra, & Sonani 1993) and teachers (Anand 1996-97). Both male and female yoga practitioners were less stressed and anxious as compared to non-yoga practitioners (Venkatesh et al. 1994). Yoga meditation was found to be useful in reducing the frequency of tension headaches (Vasudevan et al. 1994). (Pati and Chandrawanshi 2001) assessed the effects of unusual schedules of shift-working men on anxiety and mental health of their spouses and children. Anxiety and mental health of 396 subjects including 133 spouses and 263 children of day-working and shift-working men were monitored. Results indicated that the average levels of free floating anxiety among the spouses and children of shift-working men were significantly higher in comparison to the families of day workers. It was also found that the spouses of shift-working men obtained lower mental health ratings as compared to the spouses of day-working men. (Srivastava & Pandey 2000) examined the relationship between role conflict and tension among 100 university employees. Results revealed that though the correlation between role conflict and tension was not significant, employees scored high both on role conflict and tension.

Therefore, there is large body of literature on stress and interesting conclusions may be drawn on the basis of these researches. Majority of the studies have shown stress to be related to the position within the hierarchy, with those who are lower in the hierarchy being more stressed than those who are higher in the hierarchy. There is considerable research on the various facets of role related stress. Stress is also responded to in different ways by male and female employees, it is determined by various physical conditions, inter and intra organizational stressors etc. Further, stress contributes to psychological strain and perception of unfairness and is also related to frustration, quality of work life and
conflict. Although researches have been carried out to study and compare occupational stress between public and private sector employees, however stress differentials between employees of different managerial cadre and different income bracket has not been done so far. This study attempts to identify stress between different income bracket of employees between public and private sector in Assam. The study also undertakes to compare male and female stress.
REFERENCES


