3.1 Introduction.

Occupational Stress is a growing problem that results in substantial cost to individual employees and organisation around the globe. The changing nature of work has placed unprecedented demands on employees, and fuelled concerns about the effect this change is having on the well being and health of employees and their work organizations. In many large organizations, for example, the 1990’s were a period of dramatic downsizing, outsourcing, and globalization. Although these changes have led to greater mobility and more flexible work arrangements for some employees, for others they have raised
concerns about employment security, increased work demands, and the loss of ‘connectedness’ that can result from the move toward less secure forms of employment. In many organizations, these changes have also been coupled with rapid technological changes, and a strong push for greater efficiency, increased competitiveness and improved customer services. It is this climate of continual change that is placing many employees under pressure and creating high levels of occupational stress.

The Academic or Scientific community has still not reached an agreed position on the meaning and definition of “Occupational Stress”. There has been considerable debate about whether it should be defined in terms of the person, the environment, or both.

3.2 Origin of the Concept

Stress is an unpleasant state of emotional arousal that people experience in situations that they perceive as dangerous or threatening. It is accompanied by physiological, behavioural and cognitive changes. Due to its multifaceted nature, the concept of stress has proved to be an imprecise term for the purpose of scientific investigation. Stress has been operationalised in many ways; and as such, it is often confounded with depression, anxiety, lack of social support, Type A behaviour, hostility, and anger. Although no consensus has been achieved regarding the definition of stress, one generally accepted conceptualization of stress is that it is a response to a threat or environmental challenge that exists on a continuum between excitement and anxiety and is normally experienced as tension or negative effect.

Stress research has come a long way since its earlier origin as an engineering term to be subsequently used in human factor research. Originally, stress was seen primarily as a physical trauma to which humans respond. More
recently it has been linked to physical events, as well as the appraisal of events, which is a cognitive phenomenon (Jones and Bright, 2001).

As early as in the fourteenth century, the term ‘stress‘ was used to denote hardship, straits, adversity or affliction (Lumsden, D.P (1981). An early contribution to stress research was the Yerkes-Dodson Law, first formulated in 1959 (Rita Agraval 2001).

![Fig: 3.1 Relationship between Level of stress and Arousal in the Individual and Performance parameters.]

This model provides insights into the association between arousal and performance. It postulates that up to a point, arousal further increases performances, but, after an optimum peak, performance levels drop as arousal increases. In the late seventeenth century, Hooke (Hinkle, 1973; 1977) used the word ‘stress’ in the context of physical sciences (now famous as Hooke’ Law of Elasticity), although this usage was not made systematic till the end of the early nineteenth century.

As far as western scientific thought on the concept of stress is concerned, humankind owes a lot to physics (Rita Aggraval pp 28). Long before behavioural scientists, physicists had been using the term to denote the
effects of overload on machines. Overworked machines, overloaded pieces of equipment tend to show lower productivity, or are said to build up over a period of time, and finally cause the machine to break down. The excessive load is normally called ‘stress’, while such stress on the machine is referred to as ‘strain’.

Stress as a concept gained even wider acceptance from the Second World War onwards. Selye, H (1956), a biologist, is said to have been instrumental in this popularization of the stress concept. He researched the physiological reactions to stress as a non specific (wider range of stressors) response of the body to any demand made upon it. He defined a stressor as any stimulus that causes a stress response. If the stimulus does not abate, a stress response, the so-called General Adaptation Syndrome, results, thus causing damage on the physiological level.

The concepts of ‘stress’ and ‘strain’ have survived over the centuries and in nineteenth century medicine, they were conceived of as the basis of ill health and for the first time, the connection between stress and disease was noted.

Much along the same lines, Walter. B. Cannon studied the effect of stress on human beings and animals in terms of the well-known ‘fight or flight syndrome. Under distress, human beings tend to choose between two alternatives: the first is to make all attempts to resist (i.e. fight) environmental pressures and through that process emerge victorious. The second is to avoid the pressure (i.e. Flight) through the use of a variety of defence mechanisms. Either of these is a way of reducing the pressure. It was Cannon who first elaborated on the physiological basis of stress.
3.2.1 The Concept

Stress is derived from the Latin word Stringere, meaning to draw tight, and was used in the seventeenth century to describe hardships or afflictions (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997:3). Numerous definitions of stress and job stress can be found in the literature. Moorhead and Griffin (1998) define stress “as a person’s adaptive response to a stimulus that places excessive psychological or physical demands on that person.” Luthans (1988) defines work stress as “an adaptive response to an external situation that results in physical, psychological and behavioural deviations for organizational participants.”

Both definitions imply that individuals respond in different ways when subjected to certain stressors. A stressor is any stimulus, which the individual perceives as a threat (Cotton, 1995). The individual must perceive the stressor to be excessive for stress to result, whether it is physical, psychological or psychosocial. Physical stressors include such conditions as environment pollutant, environmental pressure such as extreme changes in temperature, electric shock, prolonged exercise, injuries and other trauma to the body, and exposure to disease. Psychological stressors refer to those threats that are attributed to the individual’s internal reactivity, such as thought, feelings and concerns about these threats. Psychosocial stressors are those that result from interpersonal interactions, such as with colleagues at work or from social isolation.

There are numerous definitions, models and theories on how individuals are influenced by stress in the workplace. The growth of the study of psychology and stress in particular, has resulted in a wide range of definitions, not all of which assist in clarifying the meaning of the term (Jones and Bright, 2001). After extensive literature reviews, Cox (1985) defined stress as “a complex
psychological state deriving from the person’s cognitive appraisal of the adaptation to the demands of the work environment.”

According to Sharit and Salvendy (1982), stress can be segmented into physiological, psychological and social types, integrating the concept of coping strategies. They acknowledged the problem of defining stress as either a stimulus or a response. They further hypothesized that the degree to which an event is stressful depends on a complex interaction of factors that include genetic predisposition, early social experience, cultural factors and a lifelong conditioning process.

According to Cox, T. (1985, p-1156), ‘The absolute level of demand would not appear to be the important factor in determining the experience of stress. More important is the discrepancy that exists between the level of demand and the person’s ability to cope (personal resources).

Both overload (demand greater than abilities) and under load (demand less than abilities) in a work context can result in perceived stress, because it is only if an individual believes there is a discrepancy between the demands and abilities that a “Stress State” has been reached (Cox, 1985, Kroemer et al. (2001).

According to Kroemer et al. (2001), there are three major aspects to stress.

1. Job demands which depend on the tasks, the task environment and the conditions of the task, are considered to be the job stressors.
2. A person’s capability to fulfil the demand of the job.
3. The person’s attitude (influenced by physical or psychological well-being) which must match the demands.

The classic stressful situation is one in which the person’s resources are not well matched to the level of demand and where there are constraints in
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coping, and little social support. (Mc Grawth, (1970) has provided one of the most widely accepted definitions of stress: “a perceived, substantial imbalance between demand and response capability, under conditions where failure to meet the demand has important, perceived consequences”.

Stress is considered to be an individual’s psychological state which has to do with the person’s perception of the work environment and the emotional experience of it (Cox, 1985).

On the basis of the findings in both research and practice, a fairly comprehensive definition can be arrived at. One such definition is stress which consists of any event in which environmental demands, internal demands, or both, tax or exceed the adaptive resources of the individual, social system or tissue system (Farmer, Monahan and Hekeler, 1984).

3.3 Occupational Stress

Work now more than ever consumes large portions of employees’ lives. The importance of work in people’s lives can be a tremendous source of stress. Increase in work stress may result from people having longer work hours, threat of job loss due to organizational downsizing, or a host of other factors, such as ever-changing technology, and day-to-day strain in the work environment. Factors of one’s personal life can make dealing with stress at work even more difficult. Although many sources of stress are apparent in everyday life, most people would probably report at least some level of stress at work. In some cases, occupational stress can be the Number One source of stress in people’s lives. Occupational stress can result from lack of control over work or it can be due to particular issues in the workplace environment such as shift work, long work hours, time pressure, noise, close supervision and
working with hazardous products. Interpersonal conflict with co-workers and supervisors can also contribute to increase in work stress.

3.4 Stress Models

A model presents a holistic picture of the phenomenon under study. Thus a model of stress presents a visual image of the stress phenomenon in its totality: the causal factors, the symptoms, the process and the result. There are several models and theories that have been used in the literature to explain the phenomenon of workplace stress. These include such models as: Selye’s General Adaptation Syndrome (Selye, 1976), Canon’s work that underlies Selye’s proposition (Canon, 1935), and Lazarus transactional model of stress (Lazarus, 1966). These models have exerted an influence on the general direction that job stress researchers have taken. Each of these models provides a different paradigm for approaching the problem of work-related stress. Selye’s model directs the investigator to focus more on the objective features of the environment, whereas Lazarus’ model directs one to focus on the individual’s subjective appraisal of environmental demands.

Although these earlier models affect how researchers conceptualize the general problem of work stress, they have been criticized for failing to provide specific guidance as to what particular features of work are apt to be most important (Ganster and Schaubroeck, 1991). However, according to Le Fevre et al. (2003), despite the shortcomings, the models are believed to be prevalent and central to the literature on workplace stress and are accepted as representative of the range of theories in that they tend to emphasise different sources and interactional models for the induction of stress, and different outcome measures for the management of stressors.
A wide variety of models has been presented over the years, ranging from models analyzing just one aspect to those attempting to provide a general framework for the understanding of the stress phenomenon. The theoretical models that have dominated the literature on stress are reviewed here. They are:

3.4.1 Response Based Model

The Response-based approach regards stress as a response or a pattern and is treated as a dependent variable (Cox, 1978:3). The study of stress tends to be concerned with the response of an individual when the individual is exposed to an environmental stimulus or demand. The focus of the model is the manifestation of stress. The response- based approach to stress is exemplified in the writing of Hans Selye who was one of the first researcher to attempt to explain the process of stress-related illness in terms of the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) (Cox & Mackau, 1981:94; Cartwright & Cooper, 2002:48). The response based model of stress is represented schematically below.

![Figure 3.2: A response model of stress (Sutherland & Cooper, 2000: 47)](image)

3.4.2 General Adaptation Syndrome

The endocrinologist Hans Selye, widely considered the father of stress research, promulgated the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) which has been widely held as a comprehensive model to explain the stress phenomenon.
Selye, after four years of research, concluded that a series of four closely related processes occurred under conditions of stress. In view of the fact that such processes following a stressor help in the adaptation process, Selye named the conglomerate, the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS): General, because the symptoms are non-specific; Adaptation, because the reactions help one to face the changed situation; Syndrome, because they tend to occur as a cluster which can be differentiated from other symptomatic clusters.

GAS, the first scientific formulation or model of how stress acts on the individual, states that when an organism is confronted with a threat, the general physiological response occurs in three stages:

**Stage 1: Alarm Reaction**

The first stage includes an initial shock phase in which resistance is lowered, and a “counter shock phase” in which defensive mechanism becomes active (Pestonjee, D.M., 1992). Alarm reaction is characterized by autonomous excitability, adrenalin discharge, increased heart rate, muscle tone, and blood content, and gastrointestinal ulceration. Depending on the nature and intensity of the threat and the conditions of the organism, the periods of resistance vary and the severity of symptoms may differ from ‘mild invigoration’ to disease of adaptation.

**Stage 2: Stage of Resistance**

Maximum adaptation occurs during this stage. At this stage, the organism becomes attuned to the stressor and the bodily sign characteristics of the alarm reaction disappear. Resistance increases to levels above normal and one learns to cope with all the changed exigencies.
Stage 3: Stage of Exhaustion

Adaptation energy is exhausted, sign of the alarm reaction reappear, and the resistance level begins to decline irreversibly. The organism collapses. A schematic presentation of these stages is shown below.

![General Adaptation Syndrome](image)

**Figure 3.3: General physiological response to stress**

3.4.3 Person-Environment (P-E) Fit Model

French, Rodgers and Cobb (1974) saw stress and the resulting strain as a product of the interaction between the individual and the potential sources of stress in the environment. According to this model, occupational stress is primarily a result of inadequate person-environment fit. Figure 3 depicts the P-E fit model graphically, as shown below. One kind of fit is the extent to which the individual’s skills and abilities match the demands and requirements of the job. The second fit is the extent to which the job environment provides support to meet the individual’s need. The resulting stress and stressors are major contributors to psychological and physical strain. French, et al. (1974) define occupational stress as the characteristic of the job that poses a threat to the individual, and occupational strain as the deviation from a normal response that
an individual would experience in any situation (Sharif & Savendy, 1982, Harrison, 1978).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3.4:** Person – environment fit model (Adapted from Harrison, 1978)

### 3.4.4 The Job Demand/Decision Latitude Model

This model is known variously as the Job demands-Job decision latitude model, the Decision-latitude model, or the Demand-control model (Karasek, 1979 or the job-strain model (Belkie et al.2004). It is one of the most well known and influential approaches to occupational stress. It is most widely used for evaluating the psycho social work environment. It focuses on only two main constructs that can vary independently in the work environment (Ganster and Schaubroeck ,1991). These are job demands and job decision latitude.

Job demands are defined as psychological stressors, such as requirements for working fast and hard, having a great deal to do, not having enough time, and having conflicting demands.

Job-decision latitude comprises two components: the worker’s authority to make decisions on the job (decision authority), and the variety of skill used by
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the workers on the job (skill discretion). Operationally, these two components are combined into one measure of decision latitude, or control (Ganster and Schaubroeck 1991). Karasek (1979) derived this model from empirical research in the workplace and the postulate that psychological strain results from the joint effect of the demands of a work situation and the control available to the worker facing those demands. Karasek considers that the effect of job demands is moderated by decision latitude. The model predict that a combination of high job demand and low levels of job control would lead to a high level of psychological and physical strain- a high strain job. Figure No. 3.5 identifies the types of jobs that are thought to result from the various combinations of demands and control.

![Figure 3.5: Karasek's demand – control Model](source: Jones and Bright (2001))

**3.4.5 Stimulus Based Model**

The stimulus based approach views stress as an independent variable whereas the response-based approach does not. Thus the stimulus characteristics of the environment are considered as disturbing or disruptive in some way. (Cox, 1978:12; Cox & Nackay,1981:97; Sutherland & Cooper, 1990:15). This model is essentially an engineering one incorporating Hooke’s law of elasticity from Physics. Hooke’s law states that a load or a demand (the stress), which is exerted
on the metal, causes a strain resulting in deformation in the metal. Each material has an elastic limit and if the strain produced by a given stress falls within this limit, when the stress is removed, the metal will return to its original condition. Only when the strain is greater than the given elastic limit, permanent damage will occur. Applied to humans, this analogy implies that different individuals have different breaking points. Individuals are able to tolerate certain levels of stress but once this is exceeded, permanent damage, either physiological or psychological, will occur. The stimulus-based approach is shown in Fig No 3.6.

![Figure 3.6: Cox's stimulus-based model of stress.](image)

The research based on this model includes identifying the sources of stress in the work environment. Common sources involve extremes of sensory stimulation, such as noise, heat, cold, humidity, isolation and crowding and extreme workload such as overwork, underwork and boredom (Cox, 1978:15)

### 3.4.6 Transactional Models of Stress

Two major variations of the transactional models of stress are:

1. Lazarus’s transactional model of stress and
2. Cox and Mackay’s transactional model of stress.
3.4.6.1 Lazarus’s transactional model

Lazarus (1984) has developed an important psychological model of stress in which he suggests that “Stress occurs when there are demands on the person that tax or exceed his adjustment resources. Thus, if the individual views the situation as stressful, it is due to his or her cognitive appraisal of the environment. The objective characteristics of the situation are not considered. Lazarus and Folkman (1984:53) have identified three kinds of cognitive appraisal: Primary, Secondary and Reappraisal, where primary appraisal consists of the judgment that an encounter is irrelevant, benign positive or stressful secondary appraisal refers to a judgment concerning what might and can be done and reappraisal is when the appraisal is changed, based on new information from the environment and/or the person. Stress is not induced but is viewed as a process between the individual and his/her environment in which threat and coping play a role. The process of appraisal explains why some individuals are able to cope or even thrive under stressful conditions, whereas others are not.

3.4.6.2 Cox and Mackay’s transactional model of stress

Cox and Mackay (1981:101) have outlined another important psychological model of stress in which they define stress as an individual
phenomenon and the result of a transaction between the person and his situation; Cox uses the word transaction to emphasize the active and adaptive nature of the process. Thus stress is described as ‘part of a complex and dynamic system of transaction between the person and his environment (Cox, 1978:18)

This model includes both the response and stimulus-based definitions of stress and emphasizes that stress is an individual perceptual phenomenon rooted in psychological process (Cox, 1978:18). Emphasis is also placed on the feedback aspect implying that the system is cyclical rather than linear. The system consists of five stages.

Cox (1978:19) describes the first stage as representing ‘the sources of demand relating to the person’ and it forms part of the individual’s environment. These demands are either external, derived from the environment, or internal in the form of psychological needs, the fulfilment of which determines the individual’s behaviour.

The second stage consists of the individual’s perception of the demands and his or her ability to cope with the demands. (Cox 1978:18) states that “stress may be said to arise when there is an imbalance between perceived demand and the person’s perception of his capability to meet the demand”. It is important to realize that the balance or imbalance is between the perceived demand and the individual’s perceived capability and not between the demand and the individual’s actual capability. The individual’s cognitive appraisal of the potentially stressful situation and his or her capability to cope are important here. When a high demand is made on an individual, he or she will not experience stress until he or she has reached his or her limitations. At this point the individual realizes he or she cannot cope anymore and then experiences stress due to the recognition of his or her limitations and the imbalance between the demand and capability. This imbalance will be experienced on a
subjective or emotional level, coupled with changes on a physiological level as well as cognitive and behavioural attempts to reduce the stressful nature of the demand (Cox, 1978:20). The third stage is associated with the psychophysiological stages, which correspond to the response to stress. Cox feels that these responses are sometimes thought of as the end point of the stress process and should be regarded as methods of coping available to the person. The fourth stage which Cox (1978:20) feels is frequently ignored and is concerned with the consequences of the coping responses, whether actual or perceived. The fifth and last stage of the model revolves around feedback and is found to occur at all of the other stages determining the outcome at each of the stages.

Cox (1978:20) states that inappropriate and ineffective response strategies will invariably prolong or even increase the experience of stress. If inappropriate coping occurs at this point it can result in further physiological and psychological damage. This model, according to Cox (1978:20) treats stress as an intervening variable, the reflection of a transaction between the person and his environment.

3.4.7 Cybernetic Theory of Organisational Stress

The cybernetic model of stress is derived from the framework and concept of cybernetics or system control (Cummings and Cooper, 1998:12). Cybernetics is concerned with the use of information and feedback to control purposeful behaviour. The basic premise of this theory is that behaviour is directed at reducing deviations from a specific goal state; it is the deviation from the goal-state itself that directs predetermined internal mechanism that aims blindly. This perspective has been widely used in the biological, physical and social sciences to explain how system adjust or adapt their actions to cope with disturbances from goal achievement. The theory is based on the idea that system (in these case individuals) seeks to maintain some
equilibrium state, and will act to re-establish equilibrium when some external force disturbs it.

Stress as well as threat incorporates environmental factors affecting the individual, the resultant effects, and the individuals’ reactions (Appley & Turnbull, in Cummings & Cooper, 1998:104). The environmental factors refer to those factors that impact the individual’s normal functioning. Cummings and Cooper (1998:104) feel that stress ‘signifies those external factors that are currently affecting the person’, while threat in turn represents those conditions that the individual perceives are likely to affect him or her in the future. The example they give is that when ‘a person’s present employment status may not affect his or her behaviour adversely yet the rumor that company downsizing is likely to occur and may result in job loss’ can be stressful.

The immediate effect or disruption is seen as a strain within the individual, and his or her attempt to reduce it is termed ‘individual’s adjustment process’. Strain includes indicators such as rapid pulse rate or job dissatisfaction, whereas adjustment processes include behaviours such as smoking, excessive drinking or long-term effects of ineffective coping such as raised blood pressure or high cholesterol levels. Stress or threat can be viewed as the independent variable, strain as the intervening variable, and the adjustment process as the dependent variable.

Cummings and Cooper (1998:104) state that cybernetic theory allows stress to be depicted as an information feedback cycle. This process or stress cycle, has three distinct phases, the detection of strain, choice of adjustment processes and effects of adjustment processes on the stress or threat situation.
3.4.8 The Control Model of Occupational Stress

The control theory (Spector, 1998) is based on the idea that the degree to which the individual perceives they have control over the variables that have potential to cause stress in their environment effects the likelihood that they will experience stress. Control may be defined as the ability of the individual to make choice between two or more alternatives.

Control has served a central role in many theories of job stress, as well as other areas of organizational research (Ganster and Fusilier 1989). It has been implicated as a potential cause of both physical health and psychological well-being (Evans and Carrere, 1991). A more complex moderator role has also been suggested in the control/demand (Karasek, 1979), whereby control buffers the negative effects of job stressors.

3.5 Sources of Occupational Stress

Though occupational stress initially arises from constituent factors of job and its psycho-social environment, these factors are not inherently stressors. In fact, personal characteristics of the employee and his/her 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 (Srivastava, A.K. 1999:33). Thus one cannot categorize or generalize any work setting variable as a universal stressor. Stress resulted from job factors or situational factors vary from one person to another and is mediated by the personal characteristic of the employee under study. Further, certain psychological and behavioural specialties of the employee also become consistent sources of stress to him.
Sources of stress in the workplace have been identified by most of the researchers and various approaches have been used to classify these sources into a useful model.

Cooper and Marshal (1978) identified over 40 interacting factors which could be identified as sources of work stress. They grouped these into categories and proposed six major causes of stress at work. This model still serve as a sound framework for discussion of the concept. These six major categories are:-

1. Factors intrinsic to the job,
2. Role in the organization,
3. Relationship at work,
4. Career development,
5. Organizational culture and climate and
6. Organizational interface with outside (Extra organizational).

**Figure: 3.8 Dynamics of Work Stress (S. Cartwright and S.L. Cooper, 1997)**
3.5.1. Factors intrinsic to the job

According to Cooper and Marshall (1978), factors intrinsic to the job were the first and vital focus of study for early stress researchers. Since this early research, more factors intrinsic to the job which may cause stress have been identified. Too much or too little work, time pressures and deadlines, having too many decisions, fatigue from physical strain, excessive travel, long hours of work, having to cope with changes at work, new technology, the expenses of making mistakes, etc will work as basic causes of stress. Every job description includes factors which will result in stress for some people at some point of time. The following variables related to the nature of job are relevant in this connection.

1. **Work condition** It includes physical surrounding such as noise, lighting, smell and all stimuli that bombard our senses, can affect mood and overall mental state, whether or not we find them consciously objectionable (Cooper and Smith, 1985:76).

2. **Shift work** Many workers today have jobs requiring work in shift, some of which go round the clock. Studies have found that shift work is a common occupational stressor that effects blood temperature, metabolic rate, blood sugar level, mental efficiency and work motivation. It also influence sleep patterns, family life and social life.

3. **Long hours of work** Long working hours required by many jobs appeared to have an effect on the employee’s health. Studies have established a link between extended shifts and death due to coronary heart disease. In one investigation of high industry workers in the United State, Breslow and Buell (1960) found that individuals under 45 years of age who worked more than 48 hours a week had twice the risk of those with a maximum of 40 hours a week.
4. **Travel**  Travel can also be a source of stress. Traffic jams on the roads or at airports, delayed flights or trains and the logistics of unknown places can present stressful challenges.

5. **New technology**  The introduction of new technology into the work environment and its fast pace forced both the management and the employees to adapt continuously to new equipment, systems and ways of working (Cartwright and Cooper, 19197:16). In a study, investigating sources of stress among executives in 10 countries (Cooper, 1984:85), Japanese executives suffered particularly from pressure to keep up with new technology, i.e., to maintain their technological superiority. Managers in developing countries felt pressure due to the increasing emphasis on new technology, lack of trained workforce and the imposition of deadlines.

6. **Work overload**  Work overload may be either quantitative overload or qualitative overload. Quantitative overload refers to having too much work to do, whereas qualitative overload refers to work that is too difficult for the incumbent to perform (French & Caplan, 1973). Quantitative overload leads to long working hours attached with adjacent problems like increased cigarette smoking, escapist drinking, absenteeism from work, lowered self-esteem and an absence of suggestion. These results show that work overload is a potential source of occupational stress that adversely affects both health and job satisfaction.

In a summary by French & Caplan (1973), quantitative and qualitative work overload is said to be produce at least nine different symptoms of psychological and physical strain, namely, low job satisfaction, job tension, lower self-esteem, threat, embarrassment, high cholesterol levels, increased
heart rate, high skin resistance, and increased smoking. It is important to recognize, however, that these stressors and resulting in strains need to be considered in relation to the individual’s personality and ability to cope.

### 3.5.2 Role in the Organisation

A major source of occupational stress is considered to be associated with the individual’s role at work. When a person’s role in an organization is clearly defined and understood and the expectation from him is clear and non-conflicting, stress will be at the minimum (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997:16). Although individuals bring different roles in the organization, the most important role they have to work is their organizational one (Luthans, 2002:408). An individual may experience stress as a result of role ambiguity, role conflict, and the degree of responsibility for others.

#### A. Role ambiguity

Role ambiguity is the result of the individual having insufficient information about his/her work role. This lack of clarity about work objectives, expectations and the scope and responsibilities of the job, result in lower job satisfaction, high job-related tension and lower self-esteem (Kahn et al.1964). Margolis et al.(1974) also found role ambiguity to be associated with physiological strain such as increased blood pressure and pulse rate. Other indicators were depressed mood, lowered self-esteem, life dissatisfaction, job dissatisfaction, low motivation to work, and intention to leave the job.

#### B. Role conflict

Role conflict occurs when the individual is “torn” by conflicting job demands, doing things which he/she does not want to do or does not feel are part of the job. This occurs most frequently when a person is expected to perform in different ways by different groups of people. Kahn (1964) found
that men who suffered more role conflict had lower job satisfaction and higher job-related tension.

C. Responsibility for others

According to Cartwright and Cooper (1997:17) there are two types of responsibility, one for people and one for things such as budgets, equipment and buildings. Individuals taking responsibility for people would have to spend more time dealing with people, going to meetings, and trying to meet deadlines. They were more likely to experience stress than those not working with people.

D. Other role stressors

Other potential role stressors include having too little responsibility, lack of participation in decision making, lack of managerial support, having to keep up with increasing standards of performance and coping with rapid technological change (Burke, 1988; Cooper & Marshal, 1978).

3.5.3 Relationship at Workplace

The nature of relationship at workplace plays a dominant role in workplace stress. Good relationship between employees in an organization is vital for individual and organizational health. Various studies (Kahn et al. 1964; French and Caplan 1973) found mistrust among co-workers to be positively related to high role ambiguity, and thus resulted in inadequate communication, which in turn led to psychological strain symptoms such as low job satisfaction and job related threat to wellbeing (Cooper and Marshal, 1978). There are three critical relationship at work: those with superiors, those with subordinates, and those with colleagues or coworkers.
1. Relationship with superiors

Relationships with superiors or leaders have been found potentially affecting job stress. Considerate leadership style allows the employees to participate in decision making and good two-way communication which, in turn, build up “friendship, mutual trust, respect and a certain warmth between boss and subordinates” (Burke 1988; Cooper and Marshal 1978). Those subordinates who felt that their bosses were inconsiderate experienced more job pressure.

2. Relationship with subordinates

Relationship with subordinates can also be stressful, particularly for those in managerial positions with technical and scientific backgrounds as they may lack people skill (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997:18). Managers often feel resentments, anxiety and stress as a result of mismatch of formal and actual power (Cooper & Marshal, 1978).

3. Relationship with colleagues and social support

Stress among coworkers can arise from competition and personality conflict (Cartwright and Cooper, 1997:19). Abrasive, hardworking individuals cause stress for co-workers because they ignore the others’ feelings and their way of interacting (Levinson, in Cartwright and Cooper, 1997:19) Problem sharing is an important support mechanism amongst colleagues, especially early in careers. However, it was found that there was a tendency towards isolation as one advanced in corporate hierarchy. Adequate social support can be critical to the health and wellbeing of an individual and to the atmosphere and success of an organization.
3.5.4. Career Development

Cooper and Marshal (1978) identified two clusters of potential stressors in the area of career development:

1. Lack of job security, fear of redundancy, obsolescence or early retirement.

2. Status incongruity, under- or over-promotion, frustration with career ceiling.

For many workers, career progression is of vital importance. By promotion, they not only earn more money but gain increased status and experience new challenges. In the early years at a job, this goal and the ability to adapt quickly to changing situations are usually rewarded by the organization. While reaching middle management levels, however, many individuals experience slowed progression and fewer job opportunities. Organizational downsizing is now common to create smaller, flatter and more effective organizations which lead to decline in promotional opportunities. Those that are available are more complex and take longer to master; old knowledge may be obsolete, individual energies are required for family as well as work activities and younger completion is threatening.

Over-promotion and under-promotion are the two situations which will act as stressors in the organizational setup. Over-promotion (when an individual has responsibilities beyond his or her capabilities, and which situation may be exacerbated by lack of further promotion prospects), and under-promotion (when an individual has not been given responsibilities commensurate with his or her actual or self-perceived abilities) may result in minor psychological or major psychosomatic symptoms. According to Cooper and Marshal (1978) “executive neurosis” is the result of an over-promoted manager overworking to
keep down a high level of job and hiding a sense of insecurity. Occupational Locking-in (the feeling of being trapped in a job either due to the lack of suitable alternative or inability to obtain a different job) leads to job dissatisfaction and reduces mental well-being.

3.5.5 Organizational Structure and Climate

Just being part of an organization is a source of stress as it will lead to the risk of losing individual freedom, autonomy and identity. Lack of participation in the decision-making process, lack of a sense of belonging, lack of effective consultation, poor communication, restriction on behaviour and office politics (Cooper & Marshal) will intensify the magnitude of stress level. French and Caplan (1973) reported that individuals who had greater opportunities for participation in decision making showed significantly higher job satisfaction level, lower job-related feelings of threat and higher feelings of self-esteem. There is a strong indication that greater participation in the organization leads to lower staff turnover and higher productivity, and when participation is absent, it results in lower job satisfaction and higher levels of physical and mental health risk (Burke, 1988).

3.5.6 Extra-Organizational Sources of Stress

This category of potential stressors relates to the interfaces between life outside and life inside the organization which put pressure on the individual. These include family problems, life events, financial difficulties, conflict between organizational and family demands, and conflict between personal beliefs and organizational beliefs. The stress most often results from the multiple roles one person may play at work and at home (Cooper and Marshal 1978; Burke 1988). Changes in the structure of families, the increase of women in the workforce and changes in technology like internet and
Various research works in the field of occupational stress identified many organizational, extra-organizational and individual sources of stress at work. The degree to which they are associated with stress in a particular job or organization depends on the individual characteristics of the focal person. The influence of these variables as a latent factor of job stress depends on these individual characteristics.

3.6 Individual Characteristics

Peoples’ reaction to work pressure varies from peon to person. Some have better abilities to cope with pressures than others and are able to manage their behaviour to meet the challenges. Many factors contribute to these differences, such as personality, age, gender, motivation, inability to deal with problems in an area of expertise, fluctuations in ability, etc. (Cooper and Marshal 1978). Most research goes into individual differences between high and low stress individuals. Psychometric studies have shown that a high relationship exists between certain psychometric measures such as anxiety, emotional instability and depression, to name but a few, and the incidence of coronary heart disease (CHD). In addition, initial research in the early 1960s showed the relationship between behaviour patterns and CHD. This relationship was later referred to as the coronary-prone behaviour pattern Type A. This behaviour pattern is characterized by extreme competitiveness, restlessness, and hyper-alertness, explosiveness of speech, time urgency and being challenged by responsibility. Such individuals are deeply committed to work and neglect other aspects of their lives (Cooper & Bright 2001).
3.7. Consequences of Stress

Excessive job stress has been widely recognized as a source of increased discontent with the job of an individual. Although stress is considered necessary for personal growth, development and performance, it does put a strain on the individual. A majority of the stress researchers have concluded that stress gives risk to negative emotional experiences causing significant deterioration in individual’s adjustment, behavioural effectiveness and health.

The nature of the response to stress was first studied by Walter Cannon (1914) and in mid-1920 by Hans Selye. More recently, there has been an important focus on health implications of stress at workplace both to the individuals and to the organizations. This concern is founded on the idea that the intense or persistent stimulation of the stress response can result in a host of health problems. Researches in organizational stress have dominantly focused on emotional, behavioural and health outcomes of the stress experienced at work (Ivancevich & Matteson 1980). Prolonged severe stress affects the employees at the psychological as well as the physiological level. At the mild level, stress may arouse the individual for improved performance, but starts hampering performance when its intensity reaches a disruptive level, which varies with the characteristics of the focal person and the task being performed. Physiological consequences of stress include increase in serum and cholesterol levels, blood pressure, heart rate, adrenalin levels and respiratory rates. With prolonged high level of stress, a variety of psychosomatic diseases may occur. Various dimensions of job behaviour such as performance, job satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover are also affected by the stresses of job life. Schuler (1980) submerged all the consequences of job stress under three categories: psychological, physical, and behavioural symptoms.
3.7.1. Physiological Symptoms

Researches in health and medical sciences have concluded that stress could create changes in metabolism, increased heart and breathing rates, increased blood pressure, and bring on headaches, and induce heart attacks. Physical or physiological strain is hypothesized to manifest in symptoms such as high blood pressure, changes in blood eosinophils, and elevated cholesterol (Harrison, 1978). Downs et al. (1990) outlined in their review that stress has been physically related to cardiovascular disease, hypertension, ulcers, asthma and migraine headache. Edward and colleagues (1998) noted that physiological strain also included elevated blood pressure and compromised immune system functioning.

3.7.2. Psychological Symptoms

Job related stress can cause job dissatisfaction, tension, anxiety irritation, boredom, and procrastination. Harrison (1978) posed that strain referred to the deviation from normal responses and that psychological strain included responses such as job dissatisfaction, depression, lowered self-esteem and unsolved problems. Similarly Downs, Driskill and Window (1990), in their review of occupational stress, noted that the experience of stress might lead to depression, anger, fatigue, irritability, moodiness, boredom, low self-esteem, accident withdrawal and burnout. Harrison also suggested that psychological strain included dissatisfaction, anxiety, diphoria, complaints of insomnia and restlessness.

3.7.3. Behavioural Symptoms

Behaviour related symptoms of stress include changes in productivity, absenteeism and turnover as well as changes in eating habits, increased smoking or consumption of alcohol and sleep disorders. Quick et al. (1987) suggests that behavioural changes are among the earliest and most easily recognized signs of increase in stress. Some of the commonly seen behavioural
effects of stress are arguments and fights over relatively trivial matters, uncommunicativeness, withdrawal of love, increased cigarette smoking, increased alcohol and recreational drug abuse, and frequent utilization of health care services.

An individual under stress may or may not manifest all these consequences. Cognitive analyses of stress clarify that behavioural response may be unique to the person, depending on the person’s capacity of tolerance of cognitive and biologic demands, on the duration of the externally controlled stimulation, or on the capacity to control the duration of the stressors by coping and defensive cognitive processing.

![Fig 3.9: Effects of stress](image)
3.8 Individual Response to Stress

There is general agreement in stress literature to categorize the response to stress as physiological, psychological and behavioural. When a stressful situation is perceived by an employee, an immediate response is elicited. There is a variety of often negative feelings reflecting the individual’s disposition and situational factors. These strains are seen as undesirable consequences of stressors. Apart from their own undesirable nature, some strains may have additional undesired consequences for individual task performance and wellbeing. The type, number and severity of strains an individual develops are subject to individual differences (Cox, 1985).

According to Osipow and Davis (1988), the outcome of the occupational stressors is believed to be personal strain, which is manifested as vocational, physical, interpersonal and psychological strain.

Vocational strain: Some of the symptoms of vocational strain are behavioural reactions to stressful situations. These include boredom, dread lack of interest, poor concentration, and increased accident proneness. These symptoms will have a direct effect on the organization. Job dissatisfaction, for example, may result in lowered productivity levels (Sutherland, Fogarty & Pithers, 1995).

Psychological symptoms of strain: Psychological reactions to stress begin with initial shock and disbelief, followed by defensive reactions, denial, blame, and ultimately, acceptance. Strain reactions may be temporary or long term, mild or severe, depending on the longevity of the causes how strong they are and the strength of the individual’s ability to recover and cope.

Physical and physiological symptoms of strain: According to Osipow and Davis (1988), who used self-report indices to ascertain the influence of
stress on strain symptoms, physical strain is most likely to occur as a result of role overload, role insufficiency and responsibility.

3.8.1 Minor Physical and Behavioral Symptoms

A number of physical symptoms have been identified which commonly occur prior to the onset of serious stress-related illness. These include lack of appetite, insomnia, nervous twitches, headaches, high blood pressure, nail biting and indigestion. It is important to deal effectively with the stressors when minor physical manifestation of stress occurs in order to prevent an escalation in physiological strain symptoms (Cooper et al. 1988).

3.8.2 Cardio-vascular disease

There have been a good number of researches into the relationship between work stress and health, particularly the presence of cardiovascular disease (Jones and Bright 2001). Health problems arise when the stress response system is repeatedly activated, thus causing unnecessary damage to the cardiovascular system. Increased blood pressure and deposit of fatty acid can result in heart attacks and decreased blood flow to the limbs (Rodin and Salovey, 1989).

3.8.3 Immune System Disease

The body uses two ways of warding off infection: Firstly, antibodies are secreted which bind invading pathogens, thus rendering them inactive and clearing them from the body. Secondly, a more aggressive defence is used whereby the immune cells actively destroy the invading pathogens such as cancers and viruses. The body’s immune cells are the white cells which are produced and stored in the bone marrow. Stress influences the body’s ability to balance the daily fluctuations between the two immune strategies and thus the possibility of diseases (Clow, 2001).
Khatri, Chausouria and Uduppa (1977) studied the psychological aspects of stress among 25 cancer patients and performed bio-chemical analysis of blood and diseased tissues and ascertained that cancer cases were positively linked with psycho-social stress.

A number of studies have demonstrated the relationship between stressor and cold. Studies of Rama Sarma et al. (1977), A.G Datta (1977) revealed that cold stress has an effect on changes in physiological adjustments in body fluids and hematology. The findings showed that emotional distress was associated with greater risk of infection (Jones & Bright, 2001).

3.8.4 Interpersonal Symptoms of Stress

Social life is a basic need of human beings. In the work context, interpersonal contact or interaction may happen in the form of formal and informal meetings, discussions and interaction with seniors, peers, subordinates, customers and the general public. It is the individual perception of the situation, and the comfort in dealing with others, which determine the degree of pressure and stress experienced by the employees. Both prolonged isolation and too much interpersonal contact increase stress. Underload and overload of interpersonal contact may result in negative emotional reactions, excessive conflict, restlessness and anxiety, which need to be balanced to prevent mental and physical illness (Gherman, 1981).

3.9 Organizational Effect of Stress

An employee in an organization performs in accordance with various relevant expectations of others around him. His performance in the organization depends on task activities, behavioural settings as well as pattern of “interpersonal connectedness”. Sometimes, such job activities threaten to exceed the occupant’s capacities and produce stress. The emotional, physiological and
behavioural responses to experienced stress are greatly influenced by personal attributes and experiences which, in turn, may influence an individual’s performance in the organization.

Job satisfaction can be detrimentally affected by stressful working conditions; The stresses of the job life develop negative attitudes about various aspects of the job in the focal employee which ultimately generate the feeling of job dissatisfaction in the employee (Cooper et al. 1988); Kahn et.al (1964), Srivastava and Jagadish (1983); Luhadia (1991).

Low morale amongst employees and managers is frequently an organizational strain that requires an organization-wide process to counteract. It will result in decreased productivity and high turnover, resulting in losses in profit and a dent in the bottom-line of the organization (Cooper et al. 1988).

It is generally assumed and observed that there exists a negative relationship between stress and performance. Individual job performance improves with increased levels of stress, up to certain limits. However, consistent and severe stress of job life necessarily causes noticeable deterioration in employees’ performance (Kahn et al. 1965; McGrath, 1976; Behr and Newman, 1978; Srivastava and Krishna, 1991).

Occupational stress has been observed to be associated with alienation and high rate of absenteeism and turnover of the employees. These job behaviours have been identified as symptoms of stress (Akestedt,1976; Schuler, 1980). Though absenteeism and turnover allow the employee to withdraw from stressful situations, they cost a lot to the organization. These costs include new recruitment and training costs, costs due to decreased productivity and increased supervision, etc. Absenteeism affects not only productivity but also serves to reduce an employee’s level of motivation and thus exacerbate already existing problems (Matteson & Ivancievich, 1987).
A good number of studies have been made by the organizational psychologists in India and abroad to examine the relationship between job involvement and job stress. These studies yielded a negative correlation between job stress and job involvement (Madhu and Hargopal and Ravikumar 1979).

Determination in the overall effectiveness of the organization is another outcome of occupational stress. Allen, Hitt and Greer (1982) noted in their study a negative relationship between stress and perceived organizational effectiveness. In another study, Banerjee (1990) found significant negative relationship between role stress and various dimensions of perceived organizational effectiveness.

### 3.10. Coping Strategies

Individuals and organizations cannot remain in a continuous state of tension. They adopt one or another sort of adaptive behaviour to deal with stress which is called coping. The word coping has two connotations in stress literature. It has been used to denote the way of dealing with stress, or the effort to ‘master’ conditions of harm, threat, or challenge when a routine or automatic response is not readily available (Lazarus, 1974 a). The coping process in its broadest sense refers to any attempt to deal with a stressful situation which a person feels he must do something about, but which taxes or exceeds his existing adaptation response patterns.

#### 3.10.1 Coping Defined

Individuals will often state that “they are coping”, implying that they are able to deal with a perceived situation successfully. The coping process in its broadest sense refers to any attempt to deal with a stressful situation which
a person feels he must do something about, but which taxes or exceeds his existing adaptation response patterns. The Readers Digest Oxford Complete Word Finder (1993) defines the word ‘cope’ (1) to deal effectively or contend successfully with a person or a task, and (2) manage successfully; deal with the situation or problem. However, for research purposes, definitions of coping need to be independent of outcome (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984:142)

Lazarus and Folkman (1984:141) define coping as ‘constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person.

3.11 Types of Coping Strategies

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) developed a transactional model of stress, which highlighted the role of appraisals and coping in the experience of stress. To understand the individual’s interpretation of a specific stressor, one must distinguish between primary and secondary appraisals. Primary appraisal require the individual to decide whether an event poses a threat or not. Secondary appraisal refers to the individual’s perception of his/her ability to deal with the perceived stressors. If the individual believes that he or she is not able to deal with the situation, it will be perceived as a threat and the individual will then likely experience high level of stress. If, however, the individual believes that he or she can deal with the situation then this person will not experience stress.
Lazarus & Folkman (In Forshaw, 2002:64) delineated eight types of coping strategies used by individuals exposed to perceived stressors.

3.11.1. Confrontational coping

This type consists in aggressive efforts to alter the situation by standing on one ground and fighting for what one wants. It also involves a
degree of hostility by expressing one’s anger with the person who caused the problem and risk-taking by taking a chance and by doing something.

3.11.2. Distancing.

This type is characterized by an effort to detach oneself from the situation by not letting it get to one and not thinking about it. It also refers to creating a positive outlook by making a situation appear trivial and by trying to look at the bright side of things.

3.11.3. Self controlling

This type involves keeping one’s feelings to oneself and not telling others about the situation. It also refers to actions involving restraint by not burning proverbial bridges or action too hastily.

3.11.4. Seeking social support

This type requires efforts to seek informed support by talking to someone to obtain more information. It also includes seeking tangible support by talking to someone who could do something about the situation and emotional support by obtaining sympathy and understanding from someone.

3.11.5. Accepting responsibility

This approach acknowledges one’s own role in the situation and attempts to put things right by deeds, for example, by apologizing or trying to do something about the situation.

3.11.6. Escape-avoidance

This type entails escapism by wishful thinking or real effort to escape or avoid the situation, for example eating, smoking, drinking, sleeping just to avoid people.
3.11.7. Planned problem solving

This type refers to one’s deliberate efforts to change a situation, through an analytical approach to solve the problem and by finding a workable solution.

3.11.8. Positive Reappraisal

This strategy centres on one’s effort to find positive meaning through personal growth, which may include a religious component.

Most coping behaviour falls into one or more of these eight categories. An individual may use one or more of these coping strategies even when these strategies may give rise to contradictory cognitions.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984:150) divide coping strategies into two main categories, emotion-focused and problem focused. Problem-focused coping attacks the problem itself; it increases the person’s level of awareness and knowledge; it may act to reduce the threat value of the event. Emotion-focused coping simply attempts to limit the degree of emotional disruption caused by the event.

3.12 Individual Coping Strategies

A number of individual coping strategies have been researched upon and found to be effective in managing occupational stress. Exercises, relaxation, time management, behavioural self control, social support, cognitive therapeutic technique, etc., are the various commonly used individual strategies.

3.12.1. Exercise:

Exercise is one method put forward by researchers to relieve stress, whether it is walking, jogging, swimming, or aerobics (Anshel, 1995). Exercise results in increased fitness, which is the maintenance of a good physical
condition. Physical exercise constitutes a very good measure of proactive coping style that dissipates and prevents impulsive stress reaction such as irritability, anger and depression. Walking provides good exercise which not only tones up the body muscles and cardiovascular system, but also helps in refreshing the mind. About 2000 years ago, Hippocrates, the father of medicine, stated that walking is man’s best medicine. It is found that stress and strain can be countered and even prevented by regular vigorous walking; it is a ‘nature’s antidote’ (Pestonejee 1992).

3.12.2. Relaxation

Relaxation is a related method individuals can use to manage stress. Relaxation can take many forms. An individual can use specific relaxation techniques such as biofeedback, progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, yoga and meditation, and music to reduce the perceived stress and to manage a prolonged stressful situation. The individual can counter the undesirable physiological effect of the stress by decreasing muscle tension, lowering blood pressure and heart rate and by decreasing gastric activity. Regular vacation and the habit of taking things lightly will help employees to combat and manage stress effectively.

3.12.3 Time Management

Time pressure is a major cause of stress among executives. Time management is a common technique used for reducing stress by eliminating the sense of being under time pressure. Many organizations train their staff to minimize stress and to make constructive use of stress. Luthans, (2002:415) listed some of the most helpful guidelines for effective time management.

1. Make out a “to do” list that identifies everything that must be done during the day. This helps to keep track of work progress.
2. Delegate as much minor work as possible to subordinates.

3. Determine when to do the best work—morning or afternoon, and schedule the most difficult assignment for this time period.

4. Set time aside during the day, preferably at least one hour, when visitors or other interruptions may be avoided.

5. Have the secretary screen all incoming calls in order to turn away those that are minor or do not require your personal attention.

6. Eat lunch in the office one or two days a week in order to save time and give yourself the opportunity to catch up on paper work.

7. Discourage drop-in visitors by turning your desk so that you do not have eye contact with the door or hallway.

8. Read standing up. The average person reads faster and more accurately when in a slightly uncomfortable position.

9. Make telephone calls between 4.30 and 5.00pm. People tend to keep these conversations brief so that they can go home early.

10. Do not feel guilty about those things that have not been accomplished today. Put them on the top of the ‘to do’ list for tomorrow.

### 3.12.4 Social Support

Social support from friends, family, professionals and other significant contributors will work as a key factor in reducing stress at work. Seeking support does not lower one’s self-esteem if he or she does so by exercising his or her discretion. There are a number of studies, which proved the positive effects of having a strong support network on physical and mental health. Strong and deep relation with others ensure timely help in times of
trouble. Stroebe (in Forshaw 2002:66) has outlined the main categories of social support, as given below.

**A. Appraisal Support.**

This refers to where a person is enabled or encountered to evaluate his or her own state of health or problem, possibly by obtaining information and being empowered. They are therefore able to put their stressors into context.

**B. Emotional Support**

It refers to being loved, cared for, protected, listened to, empathized and sympathized with. It is what often means there should be someone to share with.

**C. Esteem Support**

This gives the individual a sense that he or she is valued, or held in esteem, by others. The feeling of self-worth and self-esteem depends on how the individual perceives others’ opinions of him or her. The more competent and skilful, worthwhile and good a person feels, the more likely he or she is able to cope with stressful demands.

**D. Informational Support**

This is often provided in the form of advice, knowledge, and feedback which can assist the individual in finding the most effective approach to deal with the stressful situation.

**E. Instrumental Support.**

It refers to down-to-earth practical matters where the individual cannot attend an exercise class if he or she has no one to look after the children, or does not have the financial resources to go.
Social support is hypothesized to moderate stress in three ways (Lim, 1996:172).

1. Social support may have a main effect on outcomes such as that individual who experience higher levels of support are expected to experience better health, less dissatisfaction with their jobs and generally protect themselves against powerful stressors.

2. Social support may have a direct or main effect on perceived stress such that when social support is present, the level of perceived stress is reduced or alleviated.

3. The third effect is a buffering, moderating, or interactive one, where social support can alter the relationship between stress and its outcomes.

Social support interacts with stress and its outcomes become more pronounced for individuals with low levels of support than for individuals with high levels of support (Lim, 1996:190; Forshaw, 2002:69).

Baron and Byrne (1997:53) conclude that people who interact closely with others are better able to avoid illness than those who remain isolated from interpersonal contact. A work setting forming close association with trusted empathetic co-workers and colleagues as well as organizations, who provide support, helps to lessen the effect of stressors (Quick et al. 1997:199).

3.13 Organizational Strategies.

Organization provides a major portion of the total stress experienced by an individual owing to the amount of time spent on the job, and the organization’s demand for performance and interaction with others. Many organizations have realized that high level of stress in the workplace can
often lead to sharp losses in productivity, increased absenteeism, decreased satisfaction, bigger healthcare spending as well as increased disability, and workers’ compensation claim. Many of the modern diseases such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, immune system diseases, depression and anxiety, to mention but few, are stress-related or stress-aggravated. So, necessary intervention is the need of the hour to improve the quality of working life.

The effects of the work environment can lead to physical and emotional distress if the workplace is not organized to minimize stress producing factors. Employers and researchers need to consider the broader focus of stress management interventions and the potential range of outcomes for the programmes. Activities aimed solely at individual reactions to stress will not be sufficient to avoid any future negative impacts.

Stressors of job life can be conveniently managed, to a large extent, at different stages of their operation through various organizational interventions. Organizational strategies that could alleviate stressors in the workplace are outlined below.

1. **Recruitment and Selection Procedure**

   Choice of occupational category is vital in understanding and managing stress. Some occupations and career paths are potentially more stressful than others. It is important to match the resources and capabilities of an individual to the requirement of the job. While selecting employees, their needs, values and attitudes should also be assessed, besides the assessment of their skills and aptitudes.
2. Training

Proper training of new employees and orientation to already working employees also can prevent the experience of stress in work setting. Training has been identified as an important component of interventions to deal with occupational stress. Several areas of training should be pursued with regard to stress management.

3. Job Enrichment and Rotation

Job enrichment can be used to build motivational factors such as recognition and responsibility in a job. Job element may be either deleted or modified, based on the need of the incumbent in order to optimize the stress factors related to productivity and satisfaction. The opportunity to experience new and different work, especially when the tasks are repetitive, will help to alleviate stress as a result of boredom.

4. Performance Planning and Management

Under performance planning the responsibilities inherent in a job are analyzed to clarify expectations from the job. It also helps to reduce the distress experienced when performance standards are not understood. Ultimately, these steps enhance the employee’s sense of security and provide clear goals for achievement.

5. Work Design and Organizational Structure

An effective stress management programme needs to address the issues of work design and structure. The work and organizational structure need to be designed or redesigned to prevent or mitigate the occurrence of occupational stress. This can be done systematically by applying scientific tools.
6. Flexible Work Time

The reorganization of working time schedules has occurred over the last decade as a result of economic restructuring. This includes greater flexibility in work schedules to cover extended operating or opening hours. Flexible work time systems, based on weekly, monthly or yearly work hours, are used by many organizations. Flexible work hours have resulted in lower stress levels, increased job enrichment, morale and autonomy, reduced absenteeism and tardiness, and improved job satisfaction and productivity, especially when the employees could choose their work time schedules.

7. Reduction in Workloads

Reduction in distressful workload is important in managing overload. Delegation and work sharing can reduce work overload. Skills in working more efficiently and effectively can be developed through courses, coaching and training. Conversely, individuals need to be open to asking for more work or responsibility if underload is experienced.

8. Organizational Culture

Employee friendly work culture will act as another intervention strategy in alleviating work stress. If employees are denied the opportunity to take time off or go on leave, it may contribute to high level of stress. When workers feel that they do not belong and they lack opportunities to participate and be involved in decision making, they may feel unduly restricted, which leads to high levels of stress. There should be good communication channel in the organization in such a manner that employees of all levels are involved in making important decisions.
9. Relationship at Work

Improvement of interpersonal relations is generally done through Employees Assistant Programme (EAP), Support Group, and Individual Therapy. Managerial support plays an important role in employee wellbeing. When supervisory support was viewed as poor, it was linked with increased levels of stress. Macro aspect of social support is less easy to change and improve, largely because systems are fixed in organizational design and are institutionalized to the organizational culture. Changes can be made, however, through group training and individual counselling, whereby structural and cultural influences can be challenged. Improving the ability to give and receive social support is critical to the effectiveness of interventions.

10. Stress Audit

The term “Stress Audit” was first used by Kets De Vries in 1979. When an organization decides to have a scientific look at the mental-cum-physical health status of its workforce, the exercise is called a Stress Audit. It involves an attempt on the part of organization to study, explore and control various types of stresses which the individual experience by virtue of their organizational membership. Pestonjee (1992) has suggested “Stress Audit” as a proactive intervention which an organization can adopt to manage stress of managerial personnel.

11. Change Management Perception (Attitude)

Many organizations have started supporting stress management classes for employees, but are not willing to modify some of the sources of their stress such as job design and managerial practices. Such resistance to change will hamper the stress management interventions. By documenting the organizational cost of stress by conducting ‘stress audit’ or surveys and
assessing stress-related indices such as the use of Employees Assistance Programme (EAP), absenteeism and turnover rate, health care claims, steps can be taken to reduce the effect stress has on the organization.

3.14 Cognitive Therapy Techniques

According to the transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), experience of the reactions to stress largely depends upon focal person’s cognitive appraisal of the stressful situation. In the primary cognitive appraisal, an employee evaluates the severity of the situation and threats imposed by it. In the secondary appraisal, he or she evaluates his capabilities and readily available resources to deal with the demand of the confronting situation. The basic principle of cognitive model of stress reactions elaborates that “one’s cognitive structure of a situation is an active and continuing process that includes successive appraisals of the external situation, and the risk, costs and gain of a particular response. When the individual’s vital interests appear to be at stake, the cognition process provides a highly selective conceptualization. Depending upon the content of the cognitive constellation, the behavioural inclination may be a desire to flee, attack, approach or avoid. In conceptualizing a particular event, the cognitive set influences the picture obtained by an individual. These cognitive sets determine which aspects are to be magnified, which to be minimized, and which to be excluded.

By developing some specific cognitive sets and patterns, and restructuring the situations, employees can prevent experiencing occupational stress to a considerable extent. Srivastava (1997) has prepared an inventory, in the form of a rating scale, of stress-resistant cognitive behavioural pattern which can be conveniently use as a tool in cognitive intervention programme. The inventory consists of the following stress-resistant cognitive patterns
1. Consider difficult, adverse or demanding job situations as an inevitable part of job life.

2. Perceive stressful job situation as a temporary phase of the job.

3. Rationalize the situation of stress and its consequences.

4. Consider the demanding situation as an opportunity to learn, develop new skills, and to enhance self-confidence.

5. Take the excessive job demands as a challenge.

6. Assess the severity of job stresses with reference to the others who are facing similar or more severe stress in their jobs.

7. Objectively think about why this situation of stress arises.

8. Believe that life is a mixture of sorrow and happiness.

9. Think that time itself will take care of such situations.

10. Accept the situations of stress thinking that there is nothing one can do to change them.

11. While dealing with the situation of stress, think about its positive outcomes.

12. Believe that every problem ultimately has some remedy.

13. Keep in mind that no one is totally free from stresses.

14. Accept the situations of stress as realities of life.

15. React to the hardships of job life with optimistic and positive effect.

16. Remind yourself that job is not everything.

17. Believe in Gita’s philosophy that “your right is to do your job only, not to worry about the fruit thereof”.

18. Accept the situations of stress as God’s will.
19. Have faith in God and His kindness.

3.15. Stress Inoculation Training

Meichenbaum (1977) has developed this technique of stress management which combines the cognitive and behavioural strategies. The purpose of Stress Inoculation Training (SIT) is to modify the individual’s response to stress and to maximize cognitive coping, which emphasizes the use of self-instruction in bringing about the desired behaviour. This strategy consists of three phases to deal with stress.

The first phase of SIT aims to educate the client with the purpose of understanding the stress response and creating a connection between the individual’s self-statements and the resultant stress reaction. The second phase focuses on the teaching of a number of coping skills for dealing with the stressors with the main emphasis on cognitive coping. Self-instruction is to encourage individuals to analyze the problem in a systematic way and learn to:

1. Assess the reality of the situation.
2. Control negative thoughts.
3. Acknowledge, use and re-label arousal.
4. Prepare to confront a stressor.
5. Cope with the reaction to a stressor.

The third stage involves exposure to the stress-inducing situation and the application of the coping skills, which had been learned. Initially, the stressors that are chosen are less demanding. When they are mastered, more demanding situations are selected. In this way, the individual is inoculated, as
in medicine where the individual is inoculated against disease. The focus is on developing and applying specific problem solving and coping skills. Standard behavioural procedures such as modelling, rehearsal, reinforcement, shaping and self-monitoring are used to learn these skills.

3.16 Conclusion

From the fore-going theoretical review on the subject, it is evident that stress as a dominant menace comes from a myriad sources- personal, organisational and inter-organisational. Various models propounded by eminent experts in the field try to unearth various causes, consequences and coping strategies of stress. The important baneful effects of stress are physiological, psychological, behavioural and organizational, which exert pressure on individuals differently. Stress, if managed well, is a friend for us, if not; it is an enemy causing disastrous consequences in our lives. To minimize the effects of stress, multitude coping strategies can be applied which go a long way in the management of stress.