The present problem entitled 'Perceived Teacher Stress: A Study of its Correlates in High and Senior Secondary School Teachers of Punjab' was researched with a view to finding out the levels of perceived occupational stress among teachers working in government and privately managed high and senior secondary schools located in urban and rural areas, and identifying its correlates from demographic, personality, attitudinal and environmental domains.

The ultimate end product of any educational planning and practice, the education of the child, is the result of four factors: namely, the teacher, the taught, the curricula, and the controlled (inside the school) and the uncontrolled (outside the school) learning environment. Though it may be difficult, or even undesirable, to list these factors in any hierarchical order yet the pivotal place of the taught cannot be denied, as all else is engaged but for him. The main agent to activate the process of education in an organized manner is, of course, the teacher himself.

There is a three-tier system of personnel operating the school educational administration in Punjab. At the top are the Secretary, Director, and 'technocrats' whose job is to frame the policies. In the second tier are placed the District Education Officers, Block Education Officers and heads of schools who implement those policies, work them out in the field and supervise the teachers. At the lowest rung of the ladder are the teachers themselves who carry out the detailed schemes in pursuance of the desired objectives. Of all these personnel, the role of the school teacher is the most crucial one.
Why is the role of a teacher so crucial in the education of the child? The teacher, by virtue of his general education, professional training, experience and professional commitment, determines the quality of education that may be imparted to the child. Nay the successful outcome of any educational planning depends directly on how successfully the teacher puts that planning into practice.

Within the learning environment, by way of an analogy, the teacher is the craftsman and the child is the raw material which needs to be moulded into the desired end product by using the curricula as the medium. Without the potter, the clay will remain clay, without acquiring any useful form, no matter of how fine a quality it may be. Obviously, without a teacher, and a competent one for that matter, all else is 'dead wood'.

The teacher's crucial role in the education of the child has been highlighted by many authorities. Three decades ago, Ryans (1960) remarked:

"If competent teachers can be obtained, the likelihood of attaining desirable educational outcomes is substantial. On the other hand, although schools may have excellent material resources in the form of equipment, buildings and text-books, and although curricula may be approximately adapted to community requirements, if the teachers are misfits or are indifferent to their responsibilities, the whole programme is likely to be ineffective and largely wasted".

Underlying the crucial role the teacher plays in influencing the quality of education, the Education Commission (1964-66) said: "Of all the different factors which influence the quality of education and its contribution to national development, the quality, competence and character of teachers are undoubtedly the most significant" (p. 46).
Humayun Kabir maintains that "without good teachers, even the best of systems is bound to fail. With good teachers, even the defects of a system can be largely overcome" (Quoted in Bhatnagar and Aggarwal, 1986, p. 6). Likewise, the crucial role played by the teacher has also been recognized by the Ministry of Education (1985).

The critical role of the teacher in the education of the child makes it incumbent upon researchers and the concerned authorities alike to study it in all aspects. Going back to the 'potter and clay' analogy, if the potter is temperamental, untrained and inexperienced, even the best of clays may be spoiled at his hands.

The teacher's role has numerous aspects which are amenable to research: for example, the relationship between his method of teaching and students' performance; his job satisfaction as a result of harmonious relationships with colleagues, his effectiveness as a disciplinarian, and so on. The present study is, however, to look at some aspects of perceived teacher stress. Now, the question arises: Why study teacher stress?

Teaching, like every other profession, has some stress built-in which may, in fact, be necessary by way of motivation. Normally, it gives no cause for concern. It becomes problematic only when it exceeds the coping abilities of the teacher. Also, experience tells, some teachers take it as a 'run of the mill' affair, giving no undue attention to it, while there are others for whom every stressful 'mole-hill' appears an 'Himalayan' obstacle to overcome. Their differentiated perceptual reactions to 'stressful' situations are significant and bound to affect their professional effectiveness. If it is assumed that these two
types of teachers, equal in all other respects but with varying responses to 'stress evoking' situations, will teach equally effectively, we are trying to 'bury our heads in sand'.

Though a few studies (Dharmangadan, 1988; Milstein and Farkas, 1988) claim that stress in teaching is not that serious as in other professions, yet there is now a mounting evidence to prove that it is universally pervasive, steadily increasing and hampering the teacher's effectiveness (Bradfield and Fones, 1985; Cox, 1977; Cox and Brockley, 1984; Cox et al., 1978; Cunningham, 1983; Dunham, 1975; Farber, 1984; Fimian and Santoro; 1983; Fletcher and Payne, 1982; ILO, 1981; Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1978a, 1978b, 1979; Martin and Walker, 1989; Nerell and Wahlund, 1981; Punch and Tutteman, 1991; Similansky, 1984; Trendall, 1989).

Concern for the study of stress has been highlighted by several books, journals and articles (Gmelch, 1988). In the mid 1970s, studies on teacher stress were few and far between, including Coats and Thoresen (1976), Keavney and Sinclair (1978) and Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977). The 1980s saw a mushrooming of such studies highlighting the international concern for teacher stress as reflected in recent studies in countries as far afield as Australia (Dockling, 1985; Laughlin, 1984; Pierce and Molloy, 1990; Tutteman and Punch, 1990), Canada (Bartell and Brenner, 1984), India (Agarwala et al., 1979; Dharmangadan, 1988), Israel (Kremer and Hofman, 1985; Similansky, 1984), Malta (Borg and Falzon, 1989), Nigeria (Okebukola and Jegede, 1989), U.K. (Kyriacou and Pratt, 1985; Pont and Reid, 1985), U.S.A. (Farber, 1984; Mazur and Lynch, 1989; McIntyre, 1984), and West Indies (Payne and Furnham,
Proliferation of research on teacher stress over the last twenty years or so, done in so many countries, bears a testimony to its universal prevalence, and the concern shown for it.

The main reason for researching into teacher stress is that prolonged occupational stress in teaching has been found resulting in both mental and physical ill-health, ultimately having deleterious effect on teacher's professional efficiency (Camp, 1985; Claxton, 1989; Fletcher and Payne, 1982; French, 1988; Galloway et al., 1984; Kyriacou and Pratt, 1985). High stress results in the lowering of intellectual ability and functioning, irrespect of one's age, education and background (Greenberg, 1980), and reporting of more physical stress symptoms, taking longer sick leave and even planning to leave job as compared to low stress teachers (Bradfield and Fones, 1985a).

Facets of teacher performance, such as creativity, classroom management and implementation of educational techniques may suffer when teachers experience high levels of stress (Kaiser and Polozynski, 1982; Solomon, 1960).

The available data increasingly indicate that stress within the teaching profession may affect not only the physical and emotional well-being of a teacher and his/her family but also the school as an organization itself (Harris et al., 1985).

There is also a concern that stress (and burnout) may significantly impair the working relationship a teacher has with his pupils/colleagues (Morris, 1988).

In England there has been a recent increase in the number of teachers claiming early retirement pensions on grounds of ill-health, precipitated by stress and attempts by teachers' unions to include an
element in their salary claims to cover stress (Kyriacou, 1987). Because of scarce employment opportunities in India, this point may not be of great relevance here. Nevertheless, the fact that the problem of teacher stress is real and very much there cannot be overlooked.

Logically, another question arises: If so much is already known about teacher stress, then what is the need for another study?

The need for the present study arises from the following reasons.

The primary justification for the present study is that almost all the previous ones on teacher stress were done abroad. Naturally, their findings cannot be justifiably extrapolated, without their verification first, to the Indian population.

Even in the Indian research, dealing with the stress theme in general, the concern has mainly been with the physical hazard stress associated with dust, dirt, noise, temperature, long working hours and dangerous unguarded machines, and rarely with the psychological hazards like role-conflict, role-ambiguity, role overload and other organizational stressors, which are equally important in affecting the quality of working life (Sharma, 1988). Hence such a study focusing specifically on the psychological parameters of stress is called for.

So far, the previous studies on teacher stress have concentrated on its prevalence (Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1977a, 1978b, 1979a; Hanson, 1971; Hargreaves, 1978), sources (e.g., Comber and Witfield, 1979; Dunham, 1977a, 1980, 1984; Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1977b; Spooner, 1984) and coping strategies (e.g., Dunham, 1984; Freeman, 1986, 1987a, 1987b; Wilkenson, 1988). The internal factors (such as those belonging to the
demographic, personality and attitudinal domains) and the external factors (such as those belonging to the environmental domain) have either been ignored or inadequately dealt with. Moreover, the observed relationship between teacher stress and many of these variables has been inconclusive and contradictory.

Take, for example, the relationship between teacher stress and age. Blanton (1985) reported the young (20 to 29 year old) teachers suffering greater stress but Donald (1988) found that it was the teachers in the 'middle range of age' who suffered more. To add more to this confusion, Bambach (1987), Foxworth and Karnes (1983), and Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1979) report no relationship, whatsoever, between teacher stress and age. Previous findings regarding the relationship between teacher stress and other demographic variables (such as sex, teaching experience, marital status, and so on) are equally inconclusive. Another study is obviously required to verify the previous findings reported elsewhere.

Very few studies have explored the relationship between teacher stress and personality dimensions, though the need for such a study was first suggested over a decade ago by Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1978b). This suggestion was made as biographical characteristics failed to account for the variations in teacher stress.

Some studies report a positive relationship between teacher stress and external locus of control (Capel, 1987; Halpin et al., 1985; Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1979). Similar relationships between perceived teacher stress and other personality dimensions, such as trait-anxiety, neuroticism and extraversion cannot be ruled out.
Likewise the association between teacher stress and environmental variables, such as location, management and size of school, presents an equally ambiguous situation. Take, for instance, the teacher stress versus size of school. Blanton (1985) found teacher stress higher in both smaller and larger schools, and lower in medium-sized schools. But Gasser (1985) reported higher stress in larger schools only. In Jone's (1988) study, school size alone did not appear to account for the stress teachers experience. The relationship between teacher stress and school organizational climate, to be taken up in this study, has remained unexplored so far.

Among the environmental variables, the one of high school versus senior secondary school is unique to the Indian education scene. High schools are the traditional educational institutions wherein education is imparted to the child upto the 10th class. On the other hand, the senior secondary system is a fairly recent phenomenon. Started in the mid 70s, it provides education for another two years after children pass their 10th class. Very little is known about these schools. Especially, their relationship with perceived teacher stress has so far remained a 'virgin' territory.

For the last ten years or so, due to unstable political situation, Punjab has been a witness to a seemingly unending sequence of tragic events where kidnappings, political black-mailing and motivated murders have been the order of the day, directly or indirectly affecting all Punjabis, irrespective of their caste, language and religion. More vulnerable have been teachers from the minority community serving in rural areas, especially in the districts bordering Pakistan where teacher kidnappings have become fairly common, causing terror and anxiety in the
teaching community (The Tribune, 31.10.1989). Teachers in other areas do not feel safe either. At the time of making this report, the whole of Punjab has been declared 'a disturbed area'. It would be interesting to find out the effects, if any, of such events on the perceived occupational stress levels of teachers.

Finally, the study of teacher stress assumes high significance in the sense that its findings might help the administration identify teachers who are especially vulnerable to occupational stress. The knowledge of the relationships between stress and other teacher characteristics, such as age, qualifications and personality make-up, and with environmental variables, such as school organizational climate, principal's leadership behaviour, teaching load, and so on, might help in discovering appropriate strategies for effecting prevention, intervention programmes.

Obviously, a study on perceived teacher stress is called for. Bound by the constraints of time and resources, the investigator intends to limit the present investigation to five variables from the demographic domain, namely age, sex, teaching experience, marital status, and educational qualification; four variables from the personality domain, namely locus of control, trait-anxiety, neuroticism and extraversion; two variables from the attitudinal domain, namely job satisfaction and teacher morale; and, nine variables from the environmental domain, namely 'consideration' and 'initiating structure' dimensions of principal's behaviour, school organizational climate, type of school (high versus senior secondary), location of school (rural versus urban), management of school (government versus private), size of school, subject-taught, and weekly teaching load. The variables under study are diagrammatically shown in Figure 1.
Figure 1-1: Variables under study

Variables

- Independent
- Dependent

Domains

Demographic
- Age
- Sex
- Marital Status
- Educational Qualification
- Teaching Experience

Personality
- Locus of Control
- Trait Anxiety
- Neuroticism
- Extraversion

Attitudinal
- Job Satisfaction
- Teacher Morale

Environmental
- Consideration
- Initiating Structure
- Organizational Climate
- Location of School
- Type of School
- Management of School
- Subject taught
- Teaching Load
- Size of School