Chapter II: Review of Literature

The multidimensionality and complexity of the phenomenon of role stress which underline the importance of regular exploration of its antecedents, determinants and consequences for the effective management is reinforced by the wealth of information available for review. The subsequent review of literature on the part played by the various variables in determining the phenomenon of role stress has been divided into three sections. Section I deliberates on the part played by the organizational variables in role stress and its subsequent impact on the organizationally relevant outcomes. Section II reveals the important part played by individual differences in role stress.

Section I

2.1 Role Stress: Sources

An important part of one’s life is one’s job or work which has been one of the major causes of stress. Bhatti et al. (2010) reiterates that out of the intra organizational and extra organizational causes of stress, 67 per cent of the overall stress experienced by the employees is due to factors within the organization whereby major cause of the stress is the workload. Various organizational related variables have been found to be the reason behind the workplace stress. Caplan (1985) reported the
factors like supervisory climate, co-workers, and time pressures, pressures for conformity which affect the mental and physical health of employees. Low control over the work environment, decreased participation in decision making about conditions of work, unpredictability of events, both too little and too much complexity in work, role ambiguity, and excessive workload, responsibility for persons, role conflict, and lack of social support are found to affect the well being of employees at the work place. With more exposure to these factors over a period of time, employees face more emotional and physiological trauma.

Abdel-Halim (1978) examined the relative importance of role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload as source of stress and dissatisfaction among managerial level employees. The results showed that role ambiguity has the strongest relationship with role responses. On the similar lines, Quah and Campbell (1994) studied role conflict and role ambiguity as factors in work stress among managers in Singapore and indicated that role conflict and role ambiguity are positively and significantly related to work stress among managers and work stress is negatively and significantly related to job satisfaction.

Aziz (2003) investigated the phenomenon of role stress and found resource inadequacy as the most compelling stressor among
employees of information technology industry. According to Ahmady et al. (2007), the most role-related stressors and forms of conflict among faculty members of Iranian medical schools include too many tasks and everyday work load; conflicting demands from colleagues and superiors; incompatible demands from their different personal and organizational roles; inadequate resources for appropriate performance; insufficient competency to meet the demands of their role; inadequate autonomy to make decision on different tasks; and a feeling of underutilization.

In another study, overload has been found to be significantly related to a number of indicators of stress reactions such as excessive drinking, low motivation to work, low self-esteem, and absenteeism (Margolis et al., 1974). Sharma and Sharma (1989) studied bureaucrats and technocrats and found that greater role ambiguity and self-role distance are associated with higher general and job anxiety. In this study, technocrats emerged as more ‘stress vulnerable’ occupational group which indicates that profession also has a major effect on the experience of occupational role stress. The findings of Rani (2001) also highlighted that profession has an important effect on role expectation conflict, role erosion, role overload, role isolation, personal inadequacy, self role distance, role ambiguity, role inadequacy. On the other area, Ivancevich et al. (1982) found that middle level managers report
significantly more stress than do lower and upper managers on four of the six environmental stressors, namely, quantitative work overload, lack of career progression, supervisory relations and role conflict leaving qualitative work overload and family situation. Middle level managers also report significantly less intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction with the job than do their counterparts at the lower and upper managerial levels. Thus, it implies that stress increases at the middle level and job satisfaction seems to decrease dramatically at this level.

Singh (1989) researched on the impact of position of an employee in the hierarchy of an organization on stress and found that the employees belonging to lower hierarchical position experience more stress. The forms of stress reported include lack of group cohesiveness, role conflict, and experience of inequity, role ambiguity, role overload, and lack of leadership support, constraints of change, job difficulty, job requirement-capability mismatch, and inadequacy of role authority. Not only the normal work routine, the organizational citizenship behaviour shown by employees involving individual initiative, like coming to work early, staying late, volunteering for special projects, etc. is also associated with higher levels of employee role overload, job stress and work-family conflict (Bolino and Turnley, 2005).
Keenan & Newton (1987) conducted a longitudinal study to investigate work-related difficulties in young professional engineers and found four areas of difficulty—people difficulties, information difficulties, technical difficulties and report writing difficulties. As compared to the other categories of difficulty, technical difficulties has been found to be less frequently mentioned which indicates that stress may have been prevalent due to non-technical aspects of job. A number of small but significant correlations between people difficulties and measures of psychological strain have been revealed. Role stress, environmental frustration, engineering field and perceived quality of training, related to people difficulties, have been indicated to be responsible for creating the psychological strain. It reinforced the key part played by ‘people’ in causing stress.

On the same lines, Rajeshwari (1992) has identified structural rigidity, poor physical working conditions and extra organizational factors to be role stressors for employees working in banks whereas inadequacy of organizational mechanisms for employee adjustment, personal inadequacy and work overload are reported by Sharma & Devi (2008) as the role stressors at banks and insurance companies. The factors that cause negative pressure on the software professionals, studied by Rajeswari & Anantharaman (2003), include fear of
obsolescence, individual team interaction, client interactions, work family interface, role overload, work culture, technical constraints, and family support to career, workload and technical risk propensity.

2.1.1 Role Stress: Consequences

The nature of relationship between role stress and outcomes important for organizations is diverse, ranging from positive outcomes to negative of different intensities. Stress stimulates performance which has been corroborated by Weiss et al. (1982) who analyzed the impact of stressful events, in and out of the work, on the ability of organizational members to make an active search for information relevant to the role. It is found that stressful events lead to more active search for information. The search increases as individuals try to obtain feedback to evaluate the correctness of their current role behaviour and look for potential alternative modes of enacting their roles. Ara (2006) has critically reviewed the research evidence in India and abroad on the types, sources, causes and consequences of role conflict among working women, their adjustment and also the relationship between socio-economic and other demographical factors and role conflict. She found that conflicts can be functional to the individual, the organization or the society, acting as a stimulus to the analysis of problems and a motive
force behind programmes of changes and reform. More attention has, however, been given to dysfunctional consequences of role conflict.

Schlenkar and Gutek (1987) explored that work role loss adversely affects the attitudes of professionals in a large social service agency. The researchers stated that work role loss is associated with lower job satisfaction; lower work related self esteem, and higher level of intention to leave the job. But at the same time it is found that employees are not likely to report work related depression or lower life satisfaction as the discontent is focused on the new jobs but not on life in general or involvement and identification with the profession.

Various role stress dimensions are also found to be negatively related with job satisfaction (Pestonjee and Singh, 1982). The relationship between role stress and job satisfaction, participation and involvement, among 120 computer professionals studied by Pestonjee and Singh (1983) showed that self role distance is negatively associated with satisfaction with the job, the management, social relations and with overall job satisfaction. Role conflict and role ambiguity are found to be positively related to job related tensions and negatively related to job satisfaction, job involvement, pay, supervision, and working conditions (Singh, 1992). Jagdish (1987) reported that the employees consider management to be responsible in creating most of the situations leading
to role stress. They, therefore, express unfavorable attitude towards the management rather than job.

Dubinsky & Yammarino (1984) undertook research on insurance sales personnel ruling that role conflict is negatively related to organizational commitment and satisfaction with the supervisor, positively associated with age and not correlated with propensity to leave, job involvement, performance (self or supervisor rated), tenure or education whereas role ambiguity is found to be inversely related to organizational commitment, job involvement, satisfaction with supervisor, and performance (self and supervisor-rated) and positively related to propensity to leave and not associated with tenure, education or age. The study also explored the effect on retail sample suggesting that role conflict is positively related to propensity to leave, negatively associated with organizational commitment and satisfaction with supervisor, and not related to job involvement, performance (self or supervisor-rated), tenure, education or age. Role ambiguity is found to be positively associated with propensity to leave and education, inversely related to job involvement, satisfaction with supervisor, and supervisor-rated performance, and not correlated with organizational commitment, self rated performance, tenure or age. Behrman & Perreault (1984) also explored the antecedents and consequences of
sales force role stress and found that role ambiguity is negatively related

to both job satisfaction and performance. However, role conflict is

established to be negatively related to job satisfaction, but positively

related to performance. It is argued that some aspects of role conflict

may be basic to the performance of the sales job even if they potentially

reduce the sales representative’s job satisfaction.

Singh and Nath (1991) has found that employees with high

organizational role stress (overall as well as dimension wise) are less

involved in the job in comparison to the employees with low

organizational role stress (overall and dimension wise) group. The

respondents who scored high on achievement, expectation and

affiliation, and dependency dimensions of organizational climate are

observed to be highly involved in their job than those respondents who

scored low. Further, the subjects categorized as external locus of control

group show lower degree of job involvement than their counterparts
categorized as internal locus of control group.

Madhu and Harigopal (1980) found a negative relationship

between role ambiguity and job involvement and job performance as

well. Srilatha and Harigopal (1985) studied 156 junior and middle level

executives both from public and private sector organizations they also

found that role conflict and role ambiguity are negatively related with
satisfaction with pay, supervision, working conditions, colleagues, opportunity for promotions and with the job as a whole.

Singh and Singh (1992) studied role stress and strain among Indian middle managers and reported that managers with high role stress experience more environmental frustration, anger reactions, and job-anxiety whereas the managers, who feel lower role stress, experience lower environmental frustration, anger reactions, and job anxiety. Gavin and Axelrod (1977) have also speculated that higher level of stress arising from conflict and ambiguity lead to high anxiety and tension. Moreover, it has been found that perceived organizational climate has a significant impact on latent hostility, anger reactions and job anxiety and that psychological strain is not only influenced by role stress but also by situational and personality variables (Singh and Singh, 1992). Keenan and Newton (1984) studied environmental frustration and indicated that organizational climate, role stress and social support all contribute to the level of environmental frustration. The strongest predictors of job dissatisfaction are organizational climate and qualitative under load.

Role Stress has also been associated with burnout. Burnout has been conceptualized as a symptom of prolonged work stress measured along emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment (Koustelios, 2001). Emotional Exhaustion refers to
feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one’s emotional resources. Depersonalization refers to a negative, callous, or excessively detached response to other people, who are usually the recipients of one’s service or care. Reduced personal accomplishment refers to a decline in one’s feelings of competence and successful achievement in one’s work. Bhana & Haffejee (1996) examined burnout and its associations with job satisfaction, role conflict and role ambiguity among 29 child care social workers in South Africa and reported that those workers who are dissatisfied with their jobs or who rated role ambiguity and role conflict high, rate themselves higher on intensity and frequency of emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. It has been thought that role ambiguity and role conflict may have arisen as a function of uncertainty about appropriate or effective behavior within a rapidly changing broader working environment and increased demands for service. Similarly, Koustelios (2001) indicated that satisfaction with the job account for depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, while satisfaction with the job and satisfaction with promotion are significant predictors for the personal accomplishment dimension of burnout. However, the findings showed that stress, e.g., role conflict and role ambiguity are not highly correlated with teachers’ burnout.
Kemery et al. (1985) collected responses from four separate samples of accountants and hospital employees and examined the relationship between both role ambiguity and role conflict—as specific forms of role stress—and job-related tension, job satisfaction, and propensity to leave. It has been found that role conflict and role ambiguity exert a direct influence on job-related tension, job satisfaction and propensity to leave an organization and at the same time appear to have indirect influence as well. Increases in role conflict, for example, lead to decreases in job satisfaction both directly and indirectly because role conflict also results in greater job-related tension. The results suggested that one way to increase job satisfaction and decrease employee propensity to terminate employment is to ease role based stressors. It has also been found that there is a significant relationship between the rising levels of role conflict and frequent use of strategies by employees to influence their managers (role senders). The strategies used by the employees include friendliness, bargaining, reason, assertiveness, higher authority and coalition (Deluga, 1989). Bedeian et al. (1981) studied relationships between job-related, interpersonal and organizational climate factors and experienced role stress (i.e. role ambiguity and role conflict) on the basis of data drawn from 202 male and female nursing personnel. Job satisfaction is found to be inversely
related to both role ambiguity and role conflict, however, organizational level does not serve as a moderator between satisfaction and role stress. It has been argued that tension and the perceived desirability of leaving the organization are affected by dissatisfaction resulting from role stress. Moreover, role stress accounts for unfavorable leader-member relations resulting in detrimental group behavior in both task and social-emotional areas. Also, the findings suggest that clear and consistent organizational practices and procedures relating to such concerns as adequate communication flow, motivational conditions, decision-making practices, and employee well-being minimizes role stress.

Srivastava (2009) also corroborated that organizational role stress is negatively related to managerial effectiveness and argued that the managers who are able to handle stress in a healthy and positive manner will be more effective as compared to the managers who treat stress as a barrier. Tosi (1971) examined some aspects of the role-taking model proposed by Kahn et al. (1964) and found that role conflict is significantly related to job satisfaction and job threat and anxiety, but not to an effectiveness measure. A relationship between influence and effectiveness in low stress situations has been reported but not under high stress. It has been argued that if influence does affect the level of effectiveness and job anxiety, it does so when there is a highly stable
organizational environment. Also, if changing levels of influence, or increasing participation, has to be considered as a strategy for increasing performance and reducing job anxiety, then attention must be given to other important aspects of the work environment, notably clarifying responsibility and authority relationships so that the individual is able to operate in a more certain, less troublesome, work situation.

Anton (2009) identified role ambiguity as the critical predictor of workers’ performance and job satisfaction. Shahu & Gole (2008) appraised a sample of 100 managers of private manufacturing firms and found that higher stress level is related to lower performance. Although too much stress has a negative influence on performance, Gmelch and Chan (1994) found that insufficient stress leads to boredom, a lack of concentration, and a lack of motivation to exert the best possible effort. Also, an inverted U-shaped relationship between stress and performance has been supported by Choo (1986). Chaudhary (2008) has also corroborated that role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, poor peer relations and intrinsic impoverishment, and the overall occupational stress are all significant but negatively related to job performance. Fried et al. (2008) indicated that role stress is related to job performance both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction and propensity to leave. Furthermore, Anderson (1976) examined the relationship between
perceived stress, performance and coping and found that perceived stress and performance displays an inverted-U relationship.

Nevertheless, Singh (1988) argued that positive linear hypothesis i.e. at higher level of stress individual experience arousal and is expected to display higher level of performance holds true in the case of transitory stress where the individual is exposed to stress transactions less frequently and for very short periods of time.

The organizational variables are also potent moderators of role stress and well being. Role overload is found to be a moderator between perceived organizational resources and self-efficacy. It has been found that resource perceptions are not related to efficacy beliefs when role overload is high but are positively related when role overload is low. Role overload also does not moderate the previous performance-self-efficacy relationship of an individual. It is found that when role overload is low, both self-efficacy and goal level are positively related to performance, but when role overload is high, neither self-efficacy nor goal level is related to performance. This means that self-regulation and performance benefits of self-efficacy and goal setting are negated by role overload. Increasing role demands can imbalance the relationship between self-efficacy and performance (Brown et al., 2005). In regard to chronic conditions of stress, employee job control is positively
associated with successful calming down and problem solving but at the same time it has been found that stressors are negatively related to immediate well being (Elfering et al., 2005). The foregoing discussion leads us to the conclusion that there are innumerable variables deep within the workplace which can lead to role stress and add to its complexity. These variables have significant relationships to organizationally important outcomes like job satisfaction, commitment, intention to leave, morale, performance, etc. However, mere existence of these variables does not lead to stress. Individual differences act as important variables which impact the experience of role stress.

Section II

2.2 Individual Differences in Role Stress

The experience of stress is not only dependent on the external stressors but also on the internal cognitive framework of an individual which shapes the perception of stress. The stress response of the individual relies on the mental processes, such as the appraisal of situations, the interpretations one gives to the situation or an event, one’s belief in his ability to cope and expectations of outcome. Thus, the stimulus is neutral. It is one’s perception of the stimulus, which depends on a number of intervening variables that decides whether the stimulus is positive or negative and what coping mechanism will be used to manage
it. Thus, stress can be viewed as a psycho-physiological arousal response occurring in the body as a result of a stimulus which becomes a “stressor” by virtue of the cognitive interpretation of the individual. Stress is, therefore, a state of the mind just like happiness (Chauhan & Chauhan, 2005).

The above discussion underlines the importance of personal factors of the individual in determining the phenomenon of stress, in general, and role stress, in particular. Spector (1982) has also made the point that personality variables play an important role in the understanding of a range of behaviours at the workplace.

2.2.1 Role Stress and Personality

One of the most prominent personality variables that have been studied in a variety of work and organizational settings has been the Locus of control. Locus of control as a personality dimension is regarded as a generalized expectation that rewards, i.e., reinforcements of life outcomes, are controlled either by one’s own efforts (internal) or by outside forces i.e. external (Rotter, 1966). In work settings, rewards can typically include promotions, favourable circumstances, salary increases, and general career progress.

Srivastava (2009) studied 200 managers from private sector organizations comprising BPO, Banks and from IT sector and reported
that internal locus of control moderates the effect of organizational role stress on managerial effectiveness in organizations. It was argued that managers with internal locus of control would perceive role stress in healthy way and would understand and solve others’ conflicting expectations in a better manner. Locus of Control has also been found to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction and job performance (Judge et al., 2003, Martin et al., 2005). It has been reported that employees who perceive themselves more in control would experience fewer negative consequences than their counterparts who perceive themselves less in control (Ganster and Fusilier, 1989). Rahim (1996) also supported that a person with high internal locus of control has belief in his ability to cope with stress functionally and more effectively than someone with high external locus of control. Similarly, Kalbers and Fogarty (2005) found that individuals with an internal locus of control are less likely to experience a high level of stress but those with external locus of control are more susceptible to stress.

Spector (1988) found that internals tend to report less role stress in comparison to externals. The impact of internal locus of control and role ambiguity has also been studied by Singh and Rhoads (1991) who supported the notion that individual with internal locus of control experience less role ambiguity as they tend to be better informed about
their role and task environment. Von and Harrison (1998) also argued that internals have a great sense of control over situations and experience less role ambiguity as a result. On the contrary, Noor (2002) found that internal locus of control does not moderate the relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction. Malik and Sabharwal (1999) indicated that individuals with external locus of control perceive more stress on account of role expectation conflict, role overload and role ambiguity. A number of other studies also substantiate that when exposed to stressful tasks, internals obtain and utilize information more effectively (Davis and Phares, 1967), are better at utilizing their experience for improving performance on a task (DuCette and Wolk, 1972), and experience less debilitating anxiety (Butterfield, 1964).

Likewise, Kahn et al. (1964) reported that the relationship between role conflict and job-related tension is higher for introverts than extroverts, and also for individuals who are flexible rather than rigid. They, further, found that those high on 'need for cognition' felt more tension when role ambiguity is high, compared with those who have low scores on the 'need for cognition' measure. Individuals with a self-fulfilling type of affective personality (i.e. showing high positive and low negative affect) presented lower levels of anxiety, depression, and stress and the highest levels of energy, optimism and self-image which
provide predictors of work-efficacy and health (Scheier and Carver, 1982). They also specified that individuals with a high-affective type of personality (i.e. showing high positive and high negative affect) present high levels of energy, optimism and self-image concurrent with high levels of anxiety, depression and stress. The variables like ego strength, job involvement, dominance, submissiveness prevalent in the individual have been found to influence the level of role conflict experienced at workplace (Harigopal, 1980; Srivastava and Sinha, 1984). Frew and Bruning (1987) suggested that personality factors as a group account for significant variance in manifest anxiety, which is an indicator for role stress. Wofford (2002) revealed that the stress propensity indicators prevalent in an individual are associated with subjective stress and strain indicators. Other studies have also indicated that anxious people might be more stressed at work and dissatisfied when things do not occur as expected (Cooper and Roden, 1985; Spector et al., 1988).

Wofford (2001) suggested that confronting organizational stressors such as a negative performance evaluation or a project deadline, some employees seem to have few ill effects while others respond with physical and psychological complaints which indicate that the role of individual stress propensity in physiological arousal and subsequent stress and strain is enormous. By measuring stress induced
reactivity in a laboratory setting it has been reported that stress propensity moderates the relationships between stressor and physiological arousal and physiological arousal and subjective stress and strain. It is reflected that for high stress propensity group, time pressure and negative feedback are more strongly associated with physiological arousal than for the low stress-propensity group.

In an attempt to understand the effect of type A/B behavior pattern among doctors and engineers, Jain et al. (2002) found that engineers experience higher occupational role stress than doctors, and type A personalities experience higher occupational role stress than type B personalities. It has also been found that in both the personality types, profession plays an important role as far as occupational role stress is concerned. Furthermore, in case of doctors, role of personality types has been reported to be significant, but in case of engineers the effect of personality types on occupational role stress is found to be neutral. Lee et al. (1993) also found that the achievement striving dimension of the Type A behavior pattern and optimism are positively related to performance, while the anger/hostility dimension is positively related to the health symptom of anxiety. Optimism, on the other hand, is negatively related to anxiety.
Mulki et al. (2008) provided evidence that role stress and work overload mediate the effect of self-efficacy on capability rewards and pay satisfaction. 138 responses of boat and marine products salespeople provided evidence that high levels of self-efficacy explain lower levels of role stress and work overload perceptions. This reflected why salespeople with higher levels of self-efficacy perform better, particularly when they interact with demanding customers. Results also showed that sales people who are confident in their abilities to complete job tasks are less likely to believe that job roles are ambiguous or in conflict and thus are less likely to view their workload as overwhelming.

On the same lines, Caplan (1985) found that the characteristics of employees like his need for high achievement or recognition can intervene and affect the well being of employees. Managers with high Type A characteristics are found to be more adversely affected by work characteristics in comparison to Type B managers (Ivancevich et al., 1982). Riolli and Savicki (2003) reported that personal moderator factors like optimism/pessimism, coping moderate the effects of chronic stress on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization. Lower optimism, higher pessimism, lower control coping, and higher escape coping are related to increased workers’ depersonalization under conditions of higher chronic stress. Chakrabarty and Sayeed (2008) also found a
negative correlation between emotional intelligence quotient and emotional exhaustion. Nagy (1985) investigated the relationships of work orientation, job involvement, and assertiveness with various classifications of burnout. The study found that burnout as experienced is not affected by the subjects’ assertiveness but the work oriented individuals are less likely to experience burnout. The study also reported that work orientation is not related to job involvement. Pandey (1998) conducted a study exploring the relationship between personality dimensions of individuals and their perceived organizational role stress. The findings of the study indicate that psychoticism-reality and neuroticism-stability dimensions are positively associated with individuals’ perceived organizational role stress; whereas extroversion-introversion dimension is found negatively associated with perceived organizational role stress. Extrovert individuals generally perceive less degree of organizational role stress than introvert individuals. Individuals with high degree of neuroticism in their personality perceive higher degree of organizational role stress than individuals with “stable” personality.

2.2.2 Role Stress and Demography

Cooke and Rousseau (1984) analyzed the relationship between work-family conflict and stress and they found that the relationship
between work-family conflict and stress is very complicated. As individuals marry and have children, they are subject to increased interrole conflict as their nonwork roles change and become increasingly demanding. The perceived workload increases with marriage. Parents, therefore, may experience more stress than nonparents. However, parents tend to experience symptoms of strain less frequently than nonparents and married individuals less frequently than those who are single.

In a study on bank managers in Nigeria by Akinnusi (1994), it is found that the women have less Type A personality and show greater behavioural stress than men. Educational attainment and level in the organization are positively related to organizational stress. Marital status is generally negatively related to stress but in case of those who are widows/divorcees or separated report high stress (Smith, et al, 2000). It is further found that women tend to talk more than men; managers who are married tend to exercise more than unmarried managers; those with higher qualifications tend to absent themselves more than less qualified and those who earn higher salaries tend to relax and exercise more than those who earn less salary.

As regards stress experienced by men and women, women experience more job stress, neuroticism, and external locus of control
while men experience higher job satisfaction (Al-Mashaan, 2001). It is stated that women may handle frustration and cope with stressful situations less well, are more sensitive to problems, and are more sympathetic with others’ problem. As regards gender-role conflict Rustemeyer (2001) found that women experience it more than men but high self-esteem immunizes women and men against the experience of gender-role conflict. It is argued to be because of generally more positive evaluation of typically masculine jobs (than the typically feminine jobs) as manifested in higher prestige, higher pay, and better prospects for promotion which is congruent with a higher self-esteem of people working in these jobs.

Madhu and Harigopal (1989) found that role conflict is significantly and positively correlated with age. It is argued that as age (and also experience) increase one tends to establish a set of stabilised role expectations and may become less inductive to change his behaviour. Sen (1981) found that role stagnation decreases as individuals advance in age and that role stress is inversely related to income. Chandriah et al. (2003) found negative relationship between age and occupational stress. Similar studies corroborating the relation between work stress, in general, and the various demographic factors
have been undertaken previously (Akinnusi, 1994; Beena and Poduval, 1992; Shen et al. 2005; Bhatia et al. 2008; Fernandes et al. 2009).

2.2.3 Role Stress and Coping

Apart from personality and demographic variables, the mode of coping used by the individual can have an influence on the experience of role stress (Srivastava, 1991; Koeske et al., 1993). Tidd and Friedman (2002) found that individuals may be able to reduce the negative individual impact of role conflict in their environment by adopting positive behavioral styles while avoiding negative ones. Srivastava (1991) reported that the individuals who use approach mode of coping in comparison to avoidance mode of coping experience more role stress, but they experience less mental health problems. Thus, physical and mental well being may be determined by the mode of coping chosen by the individual. Akinnusi (1994) found that most of the stress reactions are positively related to either the desire to quit the organization or temporarily withdraw, and to some extent, to smoking, drinking coffee or alcohol and exercise. It is further underlined that the use of these coping styles is dependent on personal characteristics as women relieve stress by talking while men mostly take to exercise, smoking or drinking. Research in this area by Sparks et al. (2001) has found that compressed work time schedules, flexible work hours increase the
satisfaction with the work environment and the work schedule itself. They also found that employees who choose their work time schedules have higher performance ratings, report less stress, greater overall well-being and reduced work interference with family, compared with employees assigned to their work schedule. Choice of the employee is found to be an important factor in the implementation of a successful flexible work schedule.

Mital (1995) studied one hundred and sixteen managers employed in industry, banks and research and development organizations for examining their role stress and modes of conflict resolution. It is found that managers express their preference for confrontation as the most desirable mode of conflict resolution. Moreover, Lee et al. (1993) revealed that while achievement striving among individuals is positively related to problem-focused coping, irritability in them shows a negative association with problem-focused coping strategy.

It is evident from the above discussion that since long scholars has approached the subject of role stress from great many angles and dimensions. The previous work in this area of research has made available a number of variables which are sources of role stress, inherent in the individual as well in any organizational setting. The workplace
variables like role conflict, ambiguity, overload, etc. have been found to be the sources of stress in the working lives of people. Personality, biographical attributes and coping skills have also been found to influence the impact of role stress at work. The relationship between role stress and outcomes like well being, job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, etc. is determined to a very large extent by the individual differences amongst the employees. Some employees have few ill effects of role stress while others respond with physical and psychological complaints. The research has, thus, focused on role stress at an individual level, on workplace-related role stress and specifically on relationships between role stress and other variables such as job satisfaction and performance, organizational commitment, workplace absenteeism, and personnel turnover. Role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload are typically referred to as role stressors. The phenomenon has been, thus, viewed from different perspectives making it multidimensional and complex.