CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1: Need and significance of the study

In India, the presence of stress among police men is felt but not recognized as the major enemy of law enforcement professionals as yet. Job stress is a phenomenon which is unmistakably part of mankind’s work environment. The police men’s work environment also does not escape from this reality. Though work stress is not necessarily a negative phenomenon and if managed purposefully can be instrumental to effective performance, excessive stress can produce adverse effects and thus needs to be prevented. Especially with regard to a vital social agency like the police, the negative implications of occupational stress assume greater significance. In fact, concern over the high incidence of occupational stress in the police in United States of America has reached such a proportion that an International Law Enforcement Stress Association (ILSEA) formed in 1978 which publishes its own quarterly magazine entitled ‘Police stress’. Highlighting the significance of the same, in the first issue of this magazine Hans Selye, the ‘Father of Stress Research’, in his opening address suggested that police is a uniquely high stress occupation. According to Selye (1978): “Unlike most professions, it ranks as one of the most hazardous, even exceeding the formidable stresses and strains of air traffic control.”

Society views the police not only as a law enforcing agency but also as an instrument of social service, an agent of social change and the protector of the rights and duties of the people. Law enforcement entails upon the police to perform their job, to be on duty even in the scorching heat of summer, pouring rain and freezing winter. Mathur (1994) observed that the glamorous exterior image of the police overshadows the challenges encountered in role enactment which are often life threatening and endanger the personnel in uniform not only on duty but even off-duty. Few occupations require the employees to face the kind of dangerous situations that police personnel encounter as part of routine. The functions of the police encompass preservation of law and order, to safeguard people from attack and to protect property among others. The society expects the cop to play the varied roles with equal elan. He
is a helper, savior, friend and referee. Then as a law enforcer he makes an arrest or uses force to enforce the rule of law. This roller-coaster ride is a process difficult to understand functionally and incomprehensible emotionally (Bratz, 1979).

The ‘help or hinder syndrome’ tests an officer’s emotions daily. Added to this, the rigours of working for long hours without rest, meager remuneration and inadequate living conditions and rotating shifts make it clear why policing is a high stress occupation. The police are expected to accomplish mood swings from loving father, understanding spouse to a lathi wielding defender of law combating a riotous mob. The job makes great demand on the mental, emotional and physical capabilities of the officer; demands that are all too often so stressful that they begin to destroy the individual (Depue, 1979).

To preserve and protect lives on the one hand and to be prepared at a moment’s notice to lay down his own life in the service of the nation is a challenge this occupation expects its aspirants to handle. People involved in law enforcement are constantly exposed to other people’s problems as well as their own. The daily enigmas occurring in every person’s life become greatly intensified for a police officer on duty. Law enforcement tends to impose a higher degree of stress and a multiplicity of stressful situations on the individual than do most other professions (Colwell, 1988). In the course of his duty, the cop encounters the dark side of human nature. Standing alone in the street, facing the reality of irrational violence, the policeman has to cope with his emotions, suppressing them and appearing in control as the society expects him to. Kunce and Anderson (1988) have outlined five non-pathological attributes necessary for successful performance as a police officer: emotional restraint, emotional expressiveness, group cohesiveness, independent style and realistic orientation.

With the growing incidences of crime and widening role expectations, the mental and physical health of police personnel assumes greater significance than before. Stresses may be triggered from social change, economic conditions, police organization, the total criminal justice system, the demands made on police men’s time and of their families who are also experiencing stress, the job of police men in general, and from the cumulative and interactive effects of these stressors.
1.2: Policing in Indian scenario

History of modern Indian police can be traced back to 1861 when the Indian police act was passed. Basic powers and functions are mentioned in this Act and it is enacted during the British regime. The intentions of the British were quite clear. To them police was to be an instrument of control of a colony, rather than a means to secure the people at large. In this scheme of thing therefore, courtesy, good behavior and decency had not much of a place.

The British legacy, unfortunately, got too much entrenched in the Indian police system. Even in the post – independence period, the police have not been able to shed the image of an agency of repression, misbehavior and harassment to the people.

1.2.1: Police in Kerala

Since the present study aims at investigating the recognition of stress, its nature and coping strategies in Station house officers in Kerala, it is necessary to be familiar with the structure, functions and contemporary problems of the police organization in Kerala. A brief description of the structure, conditions of service, functions and role of the police is given below.

1.2.2: Structure

The police Act of 1861 made the establishment of organized police forces the responsibility of the various provincial governments then in existence in India. The constitution of independent India also placed public order and police including railway and village police in the State list. The organization of police force in India is fairly uniform throughout the States with minor differences in the structure and functions which have been occasioned partly by recommendations of the state police commissions and partly as a consequence of the development of democratic institutions at the district level and below.

In the present system, the police in Kerala state is organized and maintained as one police force for the entire state under the command of a Director General of Police (State Police Chief). He is the representative of the state government for the administration of the police force throughout the state. He also gives advice on police
matters including internal economy, equipment, training and discipline of the force, its efficient organization as a means of preventing and checking crime, preserving law and order and the efficient discharge of their duties by officers of all ranks. State Police Chief is assisted by Two Additional DGP’s- South Zone and North Zone. Kerala Police is approximately 42,149 strong police force of the state of Kerala in the Republic of India. Kerala Police serve a population of over 31.8 million residing in five cities, 53 municipal towns, and 1452 villages spread over an area of 38,863 square kilometers with an average population density of 819 per square kilometer. Of this, about 8.2 million people live in urban areas and 23.6 million live in rural areas. Kerala Police Department investigates about 175,000 cases per year.

The organizational structure of Kerala Police is given is illustrated in figure1.1 (official website of Kerala Police)

Figure 1.1: Pattern of Police Organization in Kerala
Figure 1.2: Organization Structure of District Police
Figure 1.3: Organization Structures of City Police
1.2.3: Conditions of service

A brief mention of the conditions of service in the police organization would facilitate any attempt to unravel the pressures and strains that may emanate thereof.

a. Uniform: All police personnel except those serving in the Intelligence departments have to wear uniform.


c. Hours of work: all police officers are liable to be called out for duty at any time of day or night.

1.2.4: Duties and Functions of Police (Act 8 of 2011, The Kerala Police Act, 2011, Chapter II (official website of Kerala Police)

General duties of police: - The Police, as a service functioning category among the people as part of the administrative system shall, subject to the Constitution of India and the laws enacted there under, strive in accordance with the law, to ensure that all persons enjoy the freedoms and rights available under the law by ensuring peace and order, integrity of the nation, security of the State and protection of human rights.

The functions of the police: - The Police Officers shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, perform the following functions, namely:-

a. to enforce the law impartially;

b. to protect the life, liberty, property, human rights and dignity of all persons in accordance with the law;

c. to protect the internal security of the nation and act vigilantly against extremist activities, communal violence, insurgency, etc;

d. to promote and protect arrangements ensuring public security and maintain public peace;

e. to protect the public from danger and nuisance;
f. to protect all public properties including roads, railways, bridges, vital installations and establishments;

g. to prevent and reduce crimes exercising lawful powers to the maximum extent;

h. to take action to bring the offenders to the due process of law by lawfully investigating crimes;

i. to control and regulate traffic at all public places where there is movement of people and goods;

j. to strive to prevent and resolve disputes and conflicts which may result in crimes;

k. to provide all reasonable help to persons affected by natural or manmade disaster, calamity or accident;

l. to collect, examine and, if necessary, to disseminate information in support of all activities of the police and in the maintenance of security of the State;

m. to ensure the protection and security of all persons in custody in accordance with law;

n. to obey and execute lawfully all lawful commands of competent authorities and official superiors;

o. to uphold and maintain the standards of internal discipline;

p. to instill a sense of security among people in general;

q. to take charge of and ensure the security of persons, especially women and children found helpless and without support in any public place or street;

r. to discharge any duties imposed by any law for the time being in force;

s. to discharge such other functions as may be lawfully assigned to them by the Government, from time to time.

Thus, the police perform a vital role in acting as controlling radar, calculated to keep a society within its structural, cultural and legal confines.
1.3: Law enforcement stress

Law enforcement has always been a stressful occupation. However, there appear to be new and more severe sources of stress for law enforcement officers than ever before. Some of these stresses are related to increased scrutiny and criticism from the media and the public and to anxiety and loss of morale as a result of layoffs and reduced salary rises. In recent years there has been increased recognition of longstanding sources of stress, including those that some police organizations themselves may inadvertently create for officers because of their rigid hierarchical structures, a culture of machoism, minimal opportunities for advancement, and paperwork requirements (Maolloy & Mays, 1984).

Police officers and members of their families consider their job to be one of the most stressful. It is hard to disagree with that assessment, as officers themselves report high rates of divorce, alcoholism, suicide, and other emotional and health problems. No job is immune from stress, but for the law enforcement officer, the strains and tensions experienced at work are unique, often extreme, and sometimes unavoidable (Burke, 1989; Delprino, O’Quin, & Kennedy, 1997).

As is implicitly clear, the police is bound to meet multiple problems, face many challenges and encounter stress in trying to coordinate and perform the multiple roles effectively. The greatly increased conflicts in role expectations, organizational and institutional constraints, unrealistic demands and dilemmas of the police personnel in uniform, need to be examined explicitly. There is a spate of literature on police and its functionaries in India. But there are few empirical investigations and what strikes as a lacunae is the total absence of any systematic exploration or evaluation of reactions of police officers of different ranks, their grievances, their complaints and their attitudes towards their job and the community.

Commenting on the travails of the police, Bayley (1996) stated the following:

"Police work is not ordinary work. It is arduous, often dirty and unpleasant and sometimes dangerous. Indian police men are always subject to call. Night work is standard feature of their life. They are not paid for overtime work. They often work..."
on holidays and during festivals …… They are expected to risk their lives… And finally, the responsibility thrust upon them is enormous. Indian is no exception to the general rule. Of no other occupation is so much demanded with so little recognition and recompense.

Describing the process of dehumanization in the departmental culture of the police, Gautam (1993), observed that ‘prolonged absence of any family life and absence of nearness to children deprive the policeman of the feel of family life. The strains of occupation and no reasonable vacation or leave chokes his being. Task pressure drives him to do wrong things. Then probably a little bit of sadism also creeps in as he is made to sacrifice all he has and receive public condemnation as reward’.

The boredom of monotonous duties, too much workload, exposure to adverse and extreme environmental conditions, lack of communications, lack of appreciation, unsatisfactory career prospects, poor pay and allowances, conflicting expectations and complex role assigned to the law enforcers, emphasize the necessity of analyzing the perceptions of police personnel with regard to these job stressors. Mathur (1989), has succinctly put it “constant stress and strain of hazardous duties, frequent moves at short notice, inadequate pay and allowances, low social status, inadequate prospects of promotion, absence of grievances, redressal machinery, defects in career planning, long hours of work and inadequate educational facilities for children are some of the major causes of dissatisfaction and unrest among police”.

Perhaps as a consequence of the continuous and long term pressure and strain, the police force in India is showing symptoms of buckling under.

1.4 Stress

Stress is defined as a response to a:

- Perceived threat, challenge, or change
- A physical and psychological response to any demand.
- A state of psychological and physical arousal.

Every human being has to deal with stress. Life without stress is impossible. While being most known for its negative effects, stress also has a positive side. It motivates us, challenges us, and helps us change when change is needed (even if we
don’t want to change). Overcoming stress can provide personal rewards, such as feelings of competence, strength and even elation.

There are obviously different levels of stress, from minor to moderate to severe.

Stress can be:

- Acute (short-lived)
- Chronic (experienced over a long period of time)
- Accumulative (from a variety of sources over a period of time)
- Delayed (buried internally for a period of time, restructuring later in life)

Stress carries with it certain physical and psychological effects that occur at a level equivalent to the type of stress, and the level at which it is encountered. These physical and psychological effects are involuntary, meaning it is a natural uncontrollable physical and psychological reaction to an event by our mind and body.

1.4.1: A few definitions

“A generalized arousal of the psycho-physiological systems, which if prolonged can fatigue or damage the systems to the point of malfunction or diseases”- Ruben (Reference)

“The body’s non specific response to any demand placed on it, which may ultimately lead to the diseases of adaption”. –Selye (1956)

In general stress may be defined as ‘a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being”.

“A non specific physiological and psychological and response to events which are perceived as a threat to one’s well being, and are thus handled ineffectively, and stressors are basically events, situations or changes one encounters either in his work life or his personal life (Klarreich, 1990).
1.4.2: Consequences of stress

Stress can be viewed as positive stress (eustress) or negative stress (distress) with respect to the following factors:

- Subjective perception of the person
- Objective characteristics of the environment
- The threshold of tolerance
- Duration of exposure.

Thus many stressors may provide certain individuals with a pleasurable challenge, whereas, the same could distress others: e.g., highly competitive sports, adventurous stunts etc., or, stimuli which are normally distressful may be perceived as stimulants (eustress) depending upon situational biases: e.g., high noise levels (music) used by public career drivers.

Certain stimuli are objectively distressful to human machine: e.g., interference with circadian rhythm by shift work, or sustained postural requirements such as prolonged sitting by executives, standing by traffic police constables, motion by long route drivers etc. on the other hand a large number of stimuli could not be distressing, unless their objective reality is tested e.g., handling of unlawful assembly by police men etc.

The concept of stress threshold grew out of the concept that the strain reaction which although after reversible could, occasions, prove to be irreversible and damaging (Cox & Mackay, 1985, Sutherland & Cooper 1990). Individual differences in the threshold account for difference in stress resistance and vulnerability. This threshold could be evaluated as HADINESS also (Kabasa, 1979).

It is an established fact that physiological response to stress is positive in acute stage i.e., active behavioral response towards Fight or Flight; however, prolonged exposure may result in negative effects e.g., exhaustion and risks of stress induced disorders.
1.4.3: Positive Stress Effects

Stress, immediate and short term, exerts positive effects to a certain optimum level active behavioral response. The secretion of catecholamine’s, in response to acute stress, result in energy mobilization for an active behavioral response. Such positive stress effect is crucial for management of crisis situations, natural or manmade; e.g., handling of sudden riots by police personnel.

Higher energy expenditure: It is correlated life style, cardiovascular health and longevity (Paffenbarger, 1984), as well as higher work satisfaction and lover social stress, neuroticism and subjective work stress.

Positive mental health benefits: It has been established that absence of work as stressor, e.g., unemployment and retirement from work are associated with increased risk of psychological dysfunction (Kasl, 1980).

Stimulation for peak performance: Human performance behaves according to Starlings Law – as the strain increases to an optimum range. The coping mechanisms become overstretched and performance falls” (Powell, 1992).

1.4.4: Negative Stress Effects

Negative stress is perceived as threatening by the individual experiencing it, whether it is on account of his physical/psychological inadequacies or an account of his being subjected to stress for prolonged periods. Negative stress will impair the reflexes and adversely affect the performance of an individual. Chronic accumulated stress can have devastating physical and emotional outcomes. Following is an inventory of negative effects of stress (modified from Powell, 1992 & Cox, 1978).

1.4.4.1: Emotional (affect and feelings)

- Anxiety (nervousness, tension, phobias, panics).
- Depression (sadness, lowered self esteem, apathy, fatigue)
- Guilt and shame (projection, poor self-assessment).
- Moodiness (negative mood swings, problem focusing attitude).
Loneliness (social isolation, selective inattention.

1.4.4.2: Cognitive (thought process)
- Difficulty in concentrating
- Difficulty in making decisions
- Frequent forgetfulness
- Increased sensitivity to criticisms
- Negative self critical thoughts
- Distorted ideas
- More rigid attitude.

1.4.4.3: Behavioural (defense mechanisms)
- Difficulty in sleeping/early waking
- Emotional outbursts/aggression
- Excessive eating/loss of appetite.
- Excessive drinking and smoking.
- Accident proneness / trembling
- Avoidance situations.
- Inactivity.

1.4.4.4: Organisational (poor health of the organization)
- Absenteeism.
- Poor industrial relations
- High labour turn-out rates.
- High accident rates.
- Poor productivity.
- Job dissatisfaction.
1.4.4.5: Physical (physiological risks)

- Increased heart rate.
- High blood pressure due to narrowing of arteries.
- Difficulty in breathing, hyperventilation.
- Muscle contraction (aches, pains).
- Autonomic discharge (hot and cold spells, blushing, sweating).
- Numbness and tingling sensation.
- Dilation of pupil.
- Frequent urination.
- Increased blood glucose level.
- Increased blood triglyceride level/cholesterol.
- Increased blood and urine catecholamine and corticosteroid levels.
- ECG abnormalities (heart dysfunctioning)
- Decreased immunity against diseases.

1.4.4.6: Health Impairment (of the individual)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cardiovascular system</th>
<th>Coronary heart disease. etc.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central nervous system</td>
<td>Strokes, Migraine Headaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory system</td>
<td>Asthma, Allergic flare-ups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastrointestinal system</td>
<td>Peptic ulcers, Nusea, Colitis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genitourinary system</td>
<td>Impotence/ amenorrhea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immunological</td>
<td>Skin rashes, allergic flare ups</td>
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<td>Autonomic nervous system</td>
<td>Diarrhea, Fatigue</td>
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<td>Psychiatric</td>
<td>Psychoses</td>
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1.4.5: Terminal consequences of stress: neuroticism and Burnout

1.4.5.1: Neuroticism

Neuroticism is suffering from psychoneurosis as a result of failure of coping mechanisms. Anxiety neurosis is the most common form of psychoneurosis which can be described as a state of fear manifested with a feeling of inner tension and unpleasant anticipation along with somatic symptoms such as sweating, trembling and increased pulse rate. The development of anxiety depends upon two factors.

i. The amount of stress the person is under

Whether a single major problem e.g., exposure to a novel situation; or more likely, a number of smaller problems e.g., maladjustments at the place of work, which all add up to a large amount of stress.

ii. The personality structure of the individual:

Type ‘A’ personalities characterized by sustained drive towards poorly defined goals, preoccupation with deadlines, competitiveness and desire for advancement and achievement, mental and behavioural alertness or aggressiveness, chronic haste and impatience are more prone to body’s arousal responses and take longer time to calm down. Anxiety is normal healthy reaction but it becomes neurosis when it interferes with performance of activities of everyday life.

The term Burnout was derived from the concept of a rocket which having exhausted its fuel is useless but continues to circulate in space. The analogy implies a stage of NO RETURN, unless active stress management (REFUELING) is done (Freudenberger, 1974). The factors involved in the individual’s experience of burn out depend on the interaction between the environment and personal factors i.e. perceived demands of relentless work-related stress and the cognitive appraisal of the demands in the light of the personal coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Haslam (1994), has proposed a 4 stage model for relationship between stress arousal and performance:
Stage 1: Rust-Out – Stress is low; inadequate performance, boredom, lack of commitment and motivation, apathy etc.

Stage 2: Health & Well Being – increasing levels of stress, up to a limit with optimal to maximal performance.

Stage 3: Stress Syndrome – Stress in excess to optimal level with diminished performance and accompanying signs and symptoms of stress.

Stage 4: Burn –Out – extreme relentless stress where the performance declines steeply, accompanied by physical, mental and emotional exhaustion and negative attitude.

1.4.5.2: Symptoms and signs of Burnout

Hurry and worry: declined sense of humor, more work involvement at the expense of family and social life in the early stages.

Physical exhaustion: experience of physical illness and complaints such as muscle tension, headaches, dyspepsia, insomnia and lower back pain.

Mental exhaustion: distorted or uncontrolled chain of thoughts.

Emotional exhaustion: feeling of tiredness all the time in spite of adequate sleep, couple with a persistent feeling of emptiness, mood surgings with a low threshold for irritability directed towards colleagues and clients, tendency to blame others and at its extreme depression with suicidal ideation.

Loss of job satisfaction and self-esteem: there are lowered feeling of personal accomplishments, learned helplessness and defensive coping.

Negative attitude to self and others: Depersonalization – leading to the treatment of people as objects.

Increasing social withdrawal and isolation.

Self medication/drug dependence – use of benzodiazepines/ caffenisim / increase in alcohol consumption.
Burnout is an insidious process. Unless the individual has a high degree of awareness, it is difficult to detect burn-out early.

1.5: Sources of Stress in the Occupation of Police Personnel

The psychological hazards of work, which are experienced as stressful and/or otherwise carry the potential for harm for a police officer, can be conveniently discussed under nine different characteristics of job, work environment and organization of police. These are based on the “stressful characteristics of work”-consensus table proposed by Tom Cox (Research Report No. 61/1993), (Saxena A K, 2000).

1. Organisational function and Culture:
   - Poor task environment and lack of definition of objectives; e.g., more emphasis on routine tasks,
   - Poor problem solving environment; e.g., with reference to investigation of sensational and controversial cases,
   - Poor developmental environment; e.g., lack of further training, acquisition of newer technology etc.
   - Poor communication: e.g., long chain of command,
   - Non supportive culture: e.g., poor personnel policies.

2. Role in Organization:
   - Role ambiguity: lack of rewards no matter how well one may perform
   - Role conflict
   - High responsibility for people; e.g., petitions by public

3. Career development:
   - Career stagnation; promotion lag – career ceiling
   - Status incongruity.
   - Poor status.
   - Poor pay
• Job insecurity and redundancy: threats of transfer by way of punishment.

• Low social value to work; public apathy to police and the negative police image.

4. Decision – control:

• Low participation in decision making: tight hierarchy, rules and regulations

• Lack of control over work: e.g., inability to redress the genuine grievances of subordinates.

• Little decision making in work: lack of scope for free expression.

5. Interpersonal relationships at work:

• Social or physical isolation: round the clock duties.

• Poor relationship with superiors; poor leadership or personal incapability.

• Interpersonal conflict and violence: personal incompatibility to deal with peers and subordinates.

• Lack of social support: e.g., from public in detection, prevention, investigation of crimes; coordination with other departments/sections

6. Home/work interface:

• Conflicting demands: neglect of family and social obligations due to pressure of work.

• Low support at home: non-professional spouse, marital incompatibility.

• Lack of provisions: residential facilities, schooling of children.

7. Task design:

• High uncertainty in work: e.g., investigation into property offences.

• Lack of variety: boredom in routine duties.
• Fragmented work: plethora of records.
• Role insufficiency: underutilization of capabilities.
• Continual exposure to groups: political interference; trade unions, students etc., frequent law and order problems, unlawful assemblies; riot situations.

8. Work load/work place (Quantitative and Qualitative)
• Lack of control over pacing: command and control from above.
• Work overload: especially with increasing crime rate, VIP security etc.
• High levels of pacing: pressure to show results under inadequate facilities, newer modus operandi of criminals, increases in quantitative workload due to difficulty in detection and investigation.

9. Work schedule
• Long and inflexible work schedule: wearing of uniform for long hours.
• Shift working: no fixed sleeping hours.
• Unpredictable work hours: due to unforeseen developments every day.

1.6: Coping

Individuals and organizations cannot remain in a continuous state of tension. Even if a deliberate and conscious strategy is not adapted to deal with stress, some strategy is adopted: for example, to leave the conflicts and stress to take care of themselves. 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 challenging when a routine or automatic response is not readily available (Lazarus, 1974).

Coping has been widely and long regarded as having a central role in adaption, yet it has defied universal agreement on definition and has been the object of little systematic research. Because coping has always been linked to the concept of stress, its recent popularization has been occasioned by a marked growth of interest in the stress concept. The links between stress, impaired functioning, and human misery on
the negative side, and health, morale and accomplishment on the positive side, have gradually led to the recognition that while stress is an inevitable feature of the human condition, how people cope with stress is crucial in whether the adaptional outcome will be negative or positive.

1.6.1: Coping styles

The conception of coping styles borrowed some of its language from psychoanalysis but focused more on how people process information the earliest typology was repression sensitization (Byrne, 1964). Repressors avoid or suppress information, while sensitization seek or augment information. This dichotomy has reappeared in many different guises over the past 30 years, with blunting-monitoring (Miller, 1980) and approach avoidance (Roth & Cohen, 1986) (being the current manifestations of the dichotomy. In general, approach-monitoring-vigilant coping styles have been shown to be associated with better outcomes in a variety of situations, while repression-avoidant-blunting styles are associated with proper outcomes (Aldwin, 1999; Roth & Cohen, 1986).

Dichotomizing coping strategies into two broad modalities can be psychometrically appealing. Endler and Parker (1990) have shown that the factor structure of coping style inventories, which currently focus more on problem–vs. emotion–focused coping, are more stable than process measures, and often correlate reasonably well with psychological symptoms inventories. However, even early research by Lazarus and his colleagues showed that both types of coping were used in over 80% of episode, and often individuals in highly stressful situations alternate between approaching and avoiding the problem (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980, Horowitz, 1986). Particular emoting-focused coping strategies may be more consistent across time, suggesting that individuals may have characteristic ways of dealing with and or expressing emotion (Aldwin, 1999).

1.6.2: Coping Process

The coping process approach, drawing upon the cognitive behavioural perspective, argues that coping is flexible and responsive to environmental demands, as well as personal preferences. In this model, how individuals cognitively appraise situations is the primary determinant of how they cope. The four primary appraisals
are benign, threat, harm/loss, and challenge, and these are influenced both by environmental demands and individual beliefs, values and commitments (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Rather than examining general coping styles, coping process approaches examine how individuals cope with a particular stressor.

1.6.3: Stress and coping paradigm

Research on stress and coping exploded with Lazarus and Folkman’s stress and coping theory (1984). They put forth the transactional stress and coping paradigm and the most widely accepted definition of coping. According to Lazarus, coping refers to cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage disruptive events that tax the person’s ability to adjust (Lazarus, 1981). According to Lazarus and Folkman, coping responses are a dynamic series of transactions between the individual and the environment, the purpose of which is to regulate internal states and/or alter person-environment relations. The theory postulates that stressful emotions and coping are due to cognitions associated with the way a person appraises or perceives his or her relationship with the environment.

As a result, an average policeman, to borrow August Vollmores’ expression, “The Policeman is denounced by the public, criticized by the Preacher, ridiculed by the movies, berated by the newspapers and unsupported by prosecuting officers and Judges. He is shunned by the respectable, hated by the criminals, deceived by everyone, kicked like a foot ball by brainless or crooked politicians, exposed to countless dangers and temptations, condemned when he enforces the law and dismissed if he doesn’t. His home life is made unhappy by long hours of duty; he is forced to ensure every conceivable form of hardship. He is supposed to possess the qualifications of soldier, lawyer, diplomat and educator with remuneration less than that of a daily laborer. But despite these obstacles, he has achieved a fair measure of success in protecting the lives and property of citizens and preserving the integrity of this nation” (Mathur, 2001).