CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Stress in organisations is becoming an increasingly important concern in both academic research and organisational practices (Pestonjee, 1987). Such stress is being labelled as one of the major factors of the nation's lagging productivity. It is considered as the main cause of rising costs and poor performance. Numerous research studies have shown that individuals experiencing excessive stress, make more errors, absent more, and shift jobs more frequently. There is also the question of lost opportunities. It has been demonstrated that stressed employees are less creative and are less effective decision makers. There is a significant relationship between stress and health problems. What about the risk an organisation is exposed to when talented and loyal employees become ill, burnout and are consequently job disabled, or are for health reasons forced into pre-mature retirement? It is both a personal and corporate tragedy (Schuler, 1980).

Despite the high costs associated with stress, only in recent years corporations have become conscious of the dire consequences of excessive executive stress on performance and bottom line results (see Matowidlo, Packard & Manning, 1986).
Stress, the so-called boss's disease was long considered strictly a phenomenon of the affluent, industrialised western world. But a survey (conducted by the International Management Journal, 1984) on executive stress, probably the first world wide corporative study on the subject, shattered that myth. The ten country survey which drew a response of 38 per cent revealed that the spectre of executive stress is not only taking on critical dimensions for corporations in developing countries, but that its incidence is alarming especially in newly industrialised countries like Japan. The study offers qualitative insight into the pressures on executive to perform in a climate of rapid sociological, technological and economic change in emerging countries such as Brazil, Nigeria, Egypt and Singapore as well as Japan. Executives in all five countries showed a higher incidence of stress symptoms and disorders and greater tendency towards mental instability than the participants from other highly industrialised countries surveyed – the United States, Britain, Sweden, Germany and South Africa. In a cross-cultural study of the faculty members of universities in the U.S.A. and Israel, the intensity and pattern of stress experienced has been shown to be different (Keinan & Perlberg, 1987). In India also researches are now being conducted on stress related problems and results are turning out to be beneficial for stress management (see Sharma, 1988a).
Although a major portion of medical and health sciences research examines hypertension, cardiovascular disease and catecholamine production, these are not the only symptoms of stress examined, particularly in the limited stress research done in organisational behaviour and industrial psychology. In addition, a large number of other symptoms can be classified into three main categories - physiological, psychological and behavioral (Beehr & Newman, 1978). The fact that stress seems to be related to such a large number of conditions, has in part prevented systematic focus on stress in organisations (Beehr & Newman, 1978; House, 1974; Selye, 1976). A review (Mason, 1975) indicates that there is a lack of agreement over the definition of stress and the general picture in the field can still only be described as one of confusion. The term 'stress' has been used variously to refer to (i) stimulus (external force acting on the organism), (ii) response (changes in physiological functions), (iii) interaction (interaction between an external force and the resistance opposed to it as in Biology), (iv) more comprehensive combinations of the above factors.

Selye (1976) states that, "stress is the nonspecific response to any demand.... an external force operating on a system, be it an organisation or person." It is the response of the body to any demand placed upon
it. Douglass (1977) defines stress as 'any condition or situation that places special demands upon a person'. Thus, unsettled general conceptualisation of stress has made its imprint upon efforts to define job or occupational or organizational stress.

Job stress has been defined in terms of misfit between a person's skills and abilities, and demands of the job; and a misfit in terms of a person's needs supplied by the job environment which poses a threat to the individual (French, 1974). Margolis, Kroes and Quinn (1974) defined job stress as "a condition, work interacting with worker characteristics to disrupt psychological or physical homeostasis." Beehr and Newman (1978), after an extensive review of selected research on stress, define job stress as "a condition where in job related factors interact with the worker to change (disrupt or enhance) his/her psychological or physiological condition such that the person (mind and body) is forced to deviate from normal functioning. Cooper and Marshall (1976) indicated that by occupational stress is meant "negative environmental factors or stressors (e.g. work overload, role conflict/ambiguity, poor working conditions) associated with a particular job.

Schuler (1980), in an excellent article on stress in organisations, concluded that
Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is:
(a) confronted with an opportunity for being/having/doing what he desires and/or
(b) confronted with a constraint on being/having/doing what he desires and/or
(c) confronted with a demand on being/having/doing what he desires for which the resolution is perceived to have uncertainty but which will lead (upon resolution) to important outcomes.

This definition of 'stress' incorporates several aspects of research and stress definitions from both the medical and health sciences area and the organisational behaviour area. It is apparent from these definitions of job stress that in most of the stress research in organisational behaviour and industrial psychology, organisational qualities and individual qualities have been used to define job stress. Thus, stress is the lack of person-environment fit or the interaction of characteristics of the individual and the potential sources of stress in the work environment.

Kehn et al. (1964) were the earliest to draw attention to organisational stress in general and role stress in particular. Pareek's (1976) definition of role as a position occupied by a person as defined by the expectations of significant persons, including the role
occupant, indicates that there are inherent problems in the performance of a role and therefore, stress is inevitable. It is through the role that the individual and the organisation interact with each other (Pareek, 1979). Since the concept of 'role' is inextricably linked with 'expectations', the organisational factors and context assume importance due to their influence on the moulding of prescriptive and proscriptions associated with a particular position. In this concept of role several variables are involved - the self, the other roles, the expectations held by the self. It is difficult to imagine situation in which there is no conflict among these variables. Several systems of classification have been used to categorise organisational role stresses (Kahn & Quinn, 1970; Marshall & Cooper, 1979). In India Pareek (1983) has classified role stresses under two main categories, namely - role space stress conflicts, and role set conflicts. The former includes self role distance, inter role conflict, role stagnation, inter role distance and role boundedness. The latter category includes role ambiguity, role overload, role isolation, role erosion and role inadequacy. Pareek, U. (1983) has also standardised three Role Stress Scales i.e. Entrepreneurial Role Stress (ERS) scale; General Role Stress (GRS) scale and Organisational Role Stress (ORS) scale.
Research of stress in organisational settings is on the increase, particularly in the west. These researches probably began by a small group of scientists dominant figures being Kahn and French, who since 1959 are working on such subjects as "physical and mental health", "role conflict", "tension", "adjustment", in relation to industrial environment. Their research has also been concerned with the impact of organisation on individual. The principal objectives of their study were: (i) to explore the extent of role conflict and role ambiguity in industrial settings, (ii) to identify the kinds of situations that were characterised by a high degree of conflict and ambiguity, (iii) to determine the association between such conditions and several broad criteria of personal adjustment and effectiveness, and (iv) to explore the extent to which such efforts were modified by certain characteristics of the individual and of his interpersonal relations.

Kahn et al. (1964) role episode model suggests that casual sequence of stress and response takes place in the context of "enduring properties of the person,... as mediating the relationship between conflict and ambiguity on the one hand and the response of the individual on the other hand; and finally characteristics of interpersonal relations which function analogously to attributes of the person in modifying the effects of conflict and ambiguity."
The study of Rizzo group (1970) dealt with the development and testing of questionnaire measure of role conflict and role ambiguity. A description of relationship of classical or organisation theory and role theory led to the development and testing of a role dimension questionnaire. Through the citation of literature, Rizzo et al. (1970) argued that "in classical organisation theory the principle of chain of command and principle of unity of command and direction have implications for role conflict.... Both classical organisation theory and role theory deal with role ambiguity."

Investigation by French and associates concerned with determining the effects of psychological stressors on mental and physical health. 'Stress' according to them refers to (i) a misfit between the person and his environment, and (ii) is a major cause of psychological, physiological and behavioural strains. These strains such as anxiety or increased blood pressure or excessive smoking in turn effect physical and psychological well-being.

Researchers have determined correlations between role conflict/ambiguity and enduring properties
of the person such as Locus of Control, Type A Behaviour Pattern, need for clarity ego-strength, and higher order need strength etc. (Abdel Halim 1980; Caplan & Jones 1975; Evans; Palsane & Carrere, 1987; Glogow, 1986; Harigopal & Ravi Kumar, 1979; Johnson and Stinson, 1975; Marino & White, 1985; Sherry, 1981; Srivastava, 1985; Wright, Don, Thomas & James, 1982).

The association of organisational stress has been found with the characteristics of the interpersonal relations, for example, attitudes towards role senders, trust, respect and liking for each sender, support from supervisors and co-workers, etc. (e.g. Buck, 1972; Cobb & Kasl, 1977; Das, 1982; Fimian, 1986; Kaufman & Beehr, 1986; Leiter & Meechen, 1986; Mossholder, Bedeian & Armenakis, 1982; May & Revicki, 1985; Storey & Sherry, 1981).

The relationship between job characteristics such as autonomy, supervisory span, span of subordination and formalisation and role conflict have been observed, (e.g. Albrecht, Irey & Mundy, 1982; Borrego, 1980; Chacko, 1982; Keene, Ducette, & Adler, 1985; Parasuraman & Alluto, 1984).

Research with different occupational groups has also indicated relationships between role conflict/ambiguity and such outcomes as lowe self-esteem, depression,
job related tension or anxiety, dissatisfaction with job, productivity and various withdrawal behaviour (e.g. Agarwala & Malhan, 1980; Bedeian, Armenakis & Curran, 1981; Cooper, 1983; Ganster, Fusilier & Mayer, 1986; Greer & Castro, 1986; Jagdish, 1987; Mishra, 1987; Mossholder, Bedeian & Armenakis, 1981; Schuler, 1982; Srivastava, 1980; Sharma, 1987; Wells Marwell, 1976; Westman Eden & Shirom, 1985; Wright and Thomas, 1982).

There is also evidence available in the research literature that role conflict/ambiguity is not uniformly oversive for all employees. Instead its relationship to effective role responses tends to be moderated by certain personality characteristics (e.g. Beehr Walsh & Taber, 1976; Brief & Aldag, 1976; Etzion, 1984; Harigopal, 1980; Johnson & Stinton, 1975; Srivastava, 1985) and situational or job variables (e.g. Abdel & Halim, 1978; Bedeian, Armenakis & Curran, 1981; Beehr, 1976; Marino & White, 1985; Schuler, 1975; Szilagy et al. 1975). These two sets of moderator variables have largely been treated as independent of each other, and very few attempts have been made to investigate their joint or interactive affects even in the Western countries. In fact, little is known about the interacting effects of industrial and situational factors.
Role stresses have also been studied in relation to job level, length of service, gender, age and different occupational groups (e.g., Gorrell, Bragman & Hunter 1985; Jick, Todd & Mitze, 1985; Metzler, 1981; Natha, 1980; Singh, Agarwala & Malhan, 1980; Surti, 1983; Sears & Navin, 1983; Ilancevich & Matteson, 1982; Zappert & Weinstein, 1985). There are also suggestions in the literature that the pattern of association between organisational role stress and physical and psychological well-being varies with the nature of occupational group, type of organisation, job hierarchy, indices of organisational role stress and tools used etc. (see Cooper & Marshall, 1976; Collign, Smith & Hurrell, 1977; Sharma & Sharma, 1987).

As stated earlier, the role of organisation wide factors such as organisational climate has seldom been studied (Bedeian et al. 1981). While the behavioral literature is replete with theories and empirical studies focussing on the concept of organisational climate in the work environment (Joyce & Solocum's review, 1979). There is an almost complete absence of systematic research on this situational variable as related to different organisational/occupational stresses. The climate variables include organisational emphasis on personal development, organisational decision practices,
nature of organisational communication flow, character of motivational forces etc. The work climate in which people operate is composed of the numerous organisational procedures and practices that occur within their job setting. To the extent that these procedures and practices are clear and consistent, it may be argued that different role stresses will be minimised.

Various researchers irrespective of the occupational groups provide somewhat different ways of looking at the same phenomenon, i.e. a concern for the well-being of people who work, and improving their quality of working experience. The concern in the past years has been mostly about physical stressors, but recently the psychological impact of work has been recognised as important as well.

Most of the studies have considered only one or two organisational role stresses. Thus, a comprehensive view of all the organisational role stresses is not available. In fact, such research in India is still in its infancy. Moreover, most of the research in India has employed tools standardised in the West. But recent development of indigenous scales (Pareek 1983) has stimulated a meaningful, systematic and comprehensive inquiry into this area of immense potential and practical implications (Pestonjee & Singh 1982; Sharma & Sharma 1983, 1984; Surti 1983).
As pointed out by Sharma (1988), a majority of Indian studies on stress are correlational in nature and thus cause-effect generalisations cannot be made. Only Das (1982) has dealt with the predictor value of some of the dimensions of organisational climate vis-a-vis managerial stress with the help of multiple regression analysis. The managerial samples belonged to two public sector manufacturing organisations located in Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka. In this study work group climate turned out to be the major cause of managerial stress, and perceived power was the second most important cause of such stress. Unlike a majority of related studies, Das (1982) considered managerial stress as a dependent variable.

In the present study, personality and situational variables have been considered together to study their causative role in organisational role stresses in respect of a single occupational group with similar job hierarchy in three Private Sector Undertakings.

Objectives of the Study

This research has been addressed to the following research questions:-

(1) Do the marketing executives differing on Extraversion and Neuroticism dimensions of personality, perceive the Role stress differently? Are the differences similar for all the different types of Role Stress?
(ii) Do the executives with different levels (high vs. low) of Managerial Talent differ in their perception of different types of Role Stress? Are the differences similar for all types of Role Stress?

(iii) Do the executives with different levels (high vs. low) of perceived Motivational Climate differ in their perception of Role Stress? Are the differences similar for all types of Role Stress?

(iv) Do the Age and Work Experience lead to difference in their perception of different types of Role Stress?

(v) What is the nature of the relationship of the different types of Role Stress with Extraversion, Neuroticism, Managerial Talent, dimensions of Motivational Organisational Climate and demography?

(vi) What is the relative contribution of Extraversion, Neuroticism, Managerial Talent, Motivation Organizational Climate and Demographic Factors in the prediction of various types of Role Stress?

The sample of study consisted of 115 lower managerial level executives working in tractor industry in India. This study utilised the standardised measuring instruments. It is worth a special mention that a comprehensive measure of Organisational Role Stress (Pareek 1983) has been used, which takes into account all the conflicting situations which one may experience in
particular role. Unlike most of the studies in the area, the present study has considered role stresses as dependent predicted variables.

It is hoped that specific sample of lower management level marketing executives from tractor industry and the use of standardised culturally specific measuring instruments in the present study will help in filling the obvious research gap for providing a better understanding of organisational role stress in a cross-cultural perspective. Since there are inherent problems of applying a Western-based knowledge to culturally distinct countries of the third World (see Sinha & Holtzman, 1984), it is necessary to verify the generalisability of such findings to those cultures.

Further, the answers to the specific questions posed in this study can be helpful in concentrating more on the relevant factors for reducing and managing the organisational role stress. The emergence of developing countries like India into economically more advanced societies provide research opportunities to explore the relations among modernisation, occupational or role stress, and health as well as potential socio-cultural buffers of those relations (Evangel et al. 1987).