CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Career is understood as the sequence of a person’s work experiences over time (Ivancevich 2003). This implies that career takes into account, transition from one stage to another. Transition may be age based or tenure based (Hall 1976). Age-based transition refers to moving from one career stage to another career stage as age increases (Super 1957). Tenure-based transition refers to moving from one career stage to another career stage based on continuous service in the organization (Lynn et al 1996 and Lovett et al 2006). This transition is accompanied by two different changes. The first change is related to the individual’s personality and the second to the environment. In case the gap between these two changes is wide, stress is experienced.

Cooper and Marshall (1978) suggested classification of stress in terms of six different stressors: job stress, role-based stress, career stress, stress arising due to interpersonal relationships, stress associated with organizational climate and stress related to home-work interface. Of all the stressors role stress is considered important as it has a negative impact on organizational outcomes. A career consists of a sequence of roles. The stress arising due to ones’ role is termed as role stress. A role is defined as a set of functions, which an individual performs in response to the expectation of others and his own expectations about that role. Therefore it becomes
extremely important both for the individual and the organization to work in the area of role stress management.

Irrespective of any career pattern, role stress tends to emerge, based upon the way people have gone through the career stages. Two career patterns have been identified. They are the stable career pattern and the unstable career pattern (Miller and Form 1951). Stable career refers to finding a job after education and staying with it until retirement. Unstable career refers to shifting one’s job frequently, from trial to stable and back to trial again. Here people are laterally mobile and never established. In stable career pattern the stressors are quite different from those in the unstable career pattern. In the stable career pattern the stressors are linked with the career growth of the individual. In the unstable career pattern the stressors are linked to mobility.

In stable career pattern, identifying specific stressors at each career stage is desirable. Identifying suitable strategies to reduce the stressors is important. Thereby, steps can be initiated to manage stress. In turn, this will have a positive impact on organizational outcomes such as commitment and satisfaction. These outcomes are crucial as they are often interlinked. Sturges et al (2002) concluded that successful career management should be the result of some kind of career partnership between the individual and the organization.

The study of role stress in stable career pattern needs to be based on career stages. Individual’s perception of stress differs. Career stage is a critical characteristic which can explain these differences. When the perceived role stress differs, it necessitates specific stress intervention programs at different career stages. This concept is less researched in organizational studies. This is the focus of this research.
1.2 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Career management is one of the most dynamic areas of research today. Hall (1976) observed that people in different career stages have different needs, expectations, attitude, perception and behavior. When these do not match with the jobs, individuals opt to quit their jobs. More individuals today are observed to be opting to change jobs mid way, posing a problem to their organization. However, there are few who do not face such a problem at all. One such is the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

The IAS follows a stable career pattern. Once an officer enters it, there is very little chance of the person quitting the service. Typically, therefore, an officer moves from early to mid and to late career stages before retiring. It is one of the most prestigious job openings in India. Hence, the competition to enter it is very high. However, of late, it appears that the old charm is reduced, more youngsters are staying away from the service and it is not a preferred job choice. Media reports also suggest that incumbents are not provided enough opportunity to prove themselves. The rewards of the job are not commensurate with the efforts expended on the job. There is a feeling that the job is quite difficult and the officers face several stressful situations.

Moreover, these officers are constantly under tremendous pressure both from their political bosses and the general public. They have to satisfy both the groups. In certain situations, the demands posed by one group makes it difficult for the officer to meet the demands of the other group. Such conflicts often lead to stress.

In this context, a modest attempt is made to understand role stress of officers. An attempt is also made to understand if the officers experience role stress only in certain stages of their career. This will help new
incumbents prepare themselves for role stress that they are likely to face on their job. The research may throw light on how officers cope with stress. Some useful suggestions to manage role stress may emerge from the experiences of existing officers. Considering these, the present study is important not only to the IAS officers but also probably to policy makers.

### 1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objective of the study is to understand differences in role stress experienced across the early, mid and late career stages. The study also attempts to understand the direct effect of need motivation, locus of control and self-efficacy on job satisfaction and commitment. The moderating effects of these variables on job satisfaction and commitment are also examined. The sub objective of the study is to provide appropriate suggestions to manage stress.

### 1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Key points in the methodology of the study are discussed in this section.

#### 1.4.1 Data

The study relies on primary data. The primary data have been obtained from the respondents of the study, by administering a questionnaire compiled for the purpose. A pilot test was conducted using a sample of ten respondents. Based on the feedback, the questionnaire was modified. The questionnaire consists of seven sub-divisions pertaining to demographic details, role stress scale, loco inventory, general self-efficacy scale,
motivation scale, three component commitment scales and the satisfaction scale (given in Appendix 1).

1.4.2 Respondents

The respondents of the study comprised of officers of the Indian Administrative Services, belonging to the Tamil Nadu Cadre. In all there are 296 officers, of these 115 officers responded to the questionnaire. The response rate is 39%. The profile of the respondents is given in Table 1.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Under Graduate</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Graduate</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ph.D</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>06</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25-35</td>
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<td>36-46</td>
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<td>47 and above</td>
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<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Mid career</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late career</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data collected from IAS respondents
It is observed that the majority of the officers have a post graduate qualification. Majority of the respondents were males. The number of older IAS officers is more than the younger officers. The representation of women in the Indian Administrative service is rather low. The number of respondents is fairly equal across all the three career stages.

1.4.3 Research Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the stress experienced by the officers in the early, mid and late career stages.

There is no significant difference in the direct effect of need motivation, locus of control and self-efficacy on job satisfaction and commitment across career stages.

There is no significant difference in the moderating effect of need motivation, locus of control and self-efficacy on stress-satisfaction and stress-commitment relationship across career stages.

1.4.4 Questionnaire

The data for the study is obtained from the responses to the scales discussed below.

1.4.4.1 Stressors

Perceived role stress is the independent variable for this study. Role-based research carried out by researchers has paid more attention to only a few dimensions of role stress like role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload (Richard, 2001; Bhatia and Kumar, 2003; Fried, et al 2003).
However, the other important dimensions of role stress were ignored. Pareek’s Organizational Role Stress (ORS) Scale (1982) considers all dimensions of role stress. Hence, it is found to be useful and related to the group of IAS respondents who are selected for the purpose of study.

According to Pareek (1983), the ORS scale can be used for several purposes. It can be used to investigate the nature and dynamics of role stress in various organizations and to develop interventions for the use of the individual, groups and for the organization as a whole. In the past, some Indian researchers (Sen 1981; Srinivasan 1988; Mittal 1992; Raju and Madhu 1994; Pandey 1997) have adopted this scale as it exhibits an acceptable level of reliability. It is considered to be an apt instrument for the current study also, because almost every dimension of role stress included in ORS has relevance to the IAS. The scale consists of 50 items divided into 10 subscales (see Appendix I, questions 1 to 50). The subscales are inter-role distance, role stagnation, role expectation conflict, role erosion, role overload, role-isolation, personal inadequacy self-role distance, role ambiguity and resource inadequacy.

The concept of inter-role distance refers to the stress due to conflicts of not being able to share time between the multiple roles that the role occupant undertake while performing their usual role at work. In addition to this, imbalance between work and family role may also induce stress of this type. The other stressor arises when the opportunities for learning do not include growth. This leads to role stagnation.

Role expectation conflict is said to exist when the role occupant experiences conflicting expectations or demands by different role senders. Role erosion is a feeling that some important functions a role occupant would like to perform have been given to some other roles or it could be a feeling
that there is not much challenge in the functions given to the role. Role overload is also an important determinant of stress in organizations. Role occupants experience overload when they are compelled to perform beyond their capacity.

When the linkages between the departments forming the sub-system of a whole system are strong, role isolation will be low and in the absence of strong linkages, role isolation will be high. Personal inadequacy is experienced when a role occupant feels that he is not prepared to undertake the role effectively. He feels that he does not have enough knowledge, skills, or training to perform the assigned role.

The stress arising due to mis-match between role occupant’s own values and what is expected of the role may lead to self-role conflict. One may have to make a compromise between these two. They may be doing many things out of compulsion which they would not like to do. Another source of role stress is a situation when an individual has inadequate information about his work role and there is lack of clarity about the objectives to be achieved, and about the scope and responsibilities of the job. This is termed as role ambiguity. Stress is also experienced due to resource inadequacy that is when the resources required by the role occupant for performing the role effectively is not sufficiently available.

The respondents indicated whether an item is a source of stress to them. The 5-point scale ranges from, 1 (never feel this way) to 5, (always feel this way). Thus the total score on each role stress ranges from 5 to 25. The greater the score the greater is the stress due to a particular source.
1.4.4.2 Moderators

Three moderators identified for this study are locus of control, motivation and self-efficacy.

1.4.4.2.1 Locus of control

A limited number of studies have examined the moderating effect of locus of control variable and in general the underlying premise of these studies is that individuals who define stressors as controllable will be more likely to attempt to cope with them effectively and thereby experience fewer negative consequences (Ashford and Black 1996). In the current study the reason for choosing locus of control variable is to test if it helps in moderating the negative impact of stress.

Pareek’s (1982) Loco Inventory contains 30 items with 10 items each for Internality, externality (others), and externality (luck) (Appendix 1, questions 51 to 80). A person with an internal orientation believes that his or her future is controlled from within. It represents self-confidence in a person’s ability to control what happens to him in an organization. A person with external orientation believes that his or her future is controlled by powerful others. Whereas, a person with an external chance orientation believes that his or her future is controlled by luck or chance.

The concept of locus of control by Levenson (1972) was used to develop Loco inventory. The high correlation of (0.89) between Levenson’s instrument and the Loco Inventory, lends support to the validity of the inventory (Pareek 2004). The loco inventory is selected to assess the way in which the officers perceive the organizational climate and supervision.
A 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (never feel this way) to 5 (strongly feels this way) is used in scoring responses. Scores on each of the three dimensions of locus of control range from 10 to 50. For externality (others) and externality (luck), a higher total score indicates a higher level of external locus of control and for internality a higher total score indicates a higher level of internal locus of control. Later the scores are reversed for external (others) and external (luck) to facilitate easy analysis of the data.

1.4.4.2.2 Self-efficacy

Another variable which has not received considerable attention by the researchers but is considered an important moderator for the present research is self-efficacy. Self efficacy is measured using a general self-efficacy scale constructed by Sherer et al (1982). The general self-efficacy scale consists of 17 items reflecting the degree to which respondents, believe they are capable of doing their job well (Bandura 1997). The cronbach alpha for the whole scale of Sherer et al was found to have a reliability coefficient of 0.86 (Sherer et al 1982). Out of 17 items 10 items were selected (see Appendix I, questions 81 to 90) to measure the general self-efficacy of the IAS officers. The scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The score of this scale ranges from 10 to 50. The general self-efficacy scale measures the self-efficacy of the individual officers.

1.4.4.2.3 Motivation

A third moderator variable that was chosen for the purpose of study is motivation. This measure was used to test if the need for achievement, power, affiliation (McClelland 1953) moderated the relation between stress and strain. A couple of studies have been conducted using achievement need
as moderator (Srivastava 1985; Sehgal 1985) whereas research on power and affiliation need has not been given due attention.

Motivation is assessed using an adapted version of McClelland’s motivation scale (1961). It is administered on the officers to assess their level of work related need for achievement, need for power and need for affiliation, as they are instrumental to motivation, McClelland (1961). In all, there are 18 items with 6 items for each of these dimensions (Appendix 1, questions 91 to 108). The scale ranges from 1 (rarely motivates) to 5 (strongly motivates). Thus the total score on each dimension ranges from 5 to 25.

The IAS officers are perceived as achievers as they play a key role in the administration of the society. Moreover, the nature of their job is such that they have to constantly interact with different groups of people as a result there may exist a need for belongingness and affiliation, the officers may also have a high need for power as the IAS itself is considered to be a powerful portfolio.

1.4.4.3 Dependent variables

Two dependent variables identified for this study are organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

1.4.4.3.1 Organizational commitment

The three-component commitment construct developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) is used to measure the extent to which an individual identifies and is involved with his or her organization. An assessment by Robert et al (2000) and Ko et al (1997) of Meyer and Allen's three-component model of organizational commitment give evidence of an acceptable level of
reliability and validity for the scale. The three components are affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Affective commitment refers to the employee’s emotional attachment, identification and involvement with the organization. Employees with a strong affective commitment will remain with the organization because they want to do so. Continuance commitment on the other hand has to do with one’s awareness of the costs associated with leaving the present organization. Employees whose commitment is in the nature of continuance will remain in the organization because they need to do so. The third component, normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative feel that they ought to remain with the organization.

A study by Hackett et al (1994) supported the existence of the three facets of commitment. The scale is used to find the commitment level of the respondents. The scale consists of 12 items with 4 items each to measure affective commitment; continuance commitment and normative commitment (Appendix 1, questions 109-120). These three dimensions were measured on a 5-point scale, which presents options ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely). The total score on each dimension of the scale ranges from 4 to 20.

1.4.4.3.2 Job-satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an emotional response to a job situation. As such, it cannot be directly observed; it can only be inferred through employee’s self report. The most common approach for measuring job satisfaction is the use of rating scales and the most popular is the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Luthans 1992). The current study adopted this scale for the reason that it is a widely used scale in research studies; moreover it can be filled out easily and quickly. A short form of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (1977) consisting of 20 items is used. Only 12 relevant items
are selected to elicit information (see Appendix I, questions 121 to 132). Respondents indicated their degree of satisfaction on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (highly dissatisfied) to 5 (highly satisfied). The total score of the scale ranges from 12 to 60.

1.4.5 Reliability

Cronbach’s alpha (Cronbach 1951) was used to test the statistical reliability of all the scales that were used for the purpose of study. Reliability of a measure is the ability to yield consistent results (Nunnally 1988). When compared to other reliability testing methods, the internal consistency method is simple and easy for computation. An alpha coefficient of 0.60 and above is considered to be a good reliability estimate (Nunnally 1988). The reliability of the scale used is discussed in detail later. In general all scales used were found to score well on reliability.

1.4.6 Validity

Construct, convergent and content validity are also tested. The results establish the validity of measures used. These are discussed in greater detail in the discussion on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis.

1.4.7 Statistical Tools Used

The statistical tools used are Pearson’s product moment correlation, Confirmatory factor analysis, Moderator multiple regression, ANOVA and Duncan’s test. A brief description of these tools is given below.
1.4.7.1 **Pearson’s product moment correlation**

Pearson’s product moment correlation coefficient is used to investigate the direction of relationship between the independent variable and dependent variables.

1.4.7.2 **Confirmatory factor analysis**

Kerlinger (1986) described factor analysis as the most powerful tool for the study of complex behavioral areas. Factor analysis may be exploratory (EFA) or confirmatory (CFA). The exploratory factor analysis method is appropriate for those areas where no prior analyses have been done so far (Ahire et al 1996). Gorsuch (1983) stated that confirmatory methods, after specifying the priori factors, seek to optimally match the observed and latent factor structures for a given data set in order to determine the "goodness of fit" of the predetermined factor model. As this is the case in this study, the CFA was considered more appropriate than EFA.

1.4.7.2 **Moderator multiple regression analysis**

In multiple regressions the predictive ability of two or more independent (predictor) variables for a dependent variable are analyzed. As this study is interested in a measure of the total variance in the dependent variable explained by the predictors and the moderators and their relative importance, moderator multiple regression analysis is adopted. A moderator variable is one that interacts with another variable in predicting the dependent variable. The interaction term was created as the product of the two main effect variables.
The ‘F’ value for moderator multiple regression analysis is computed using the equation:

\[ F = \frac{(R^2_1 - R^2_2)}{(K - K_1)} \left( 1 - R^2_2 \right) / (N - K_2 - 1) \]

where \( K \) is the number of independents variables in each step and \( N \) is the sample size. \( R^2 \) is the percentage of variance in the dependent variable in each step. \( R^2_1 \) is the \( R^2 \) for step 1 and \( R^2_2 \) is the \( R^2 \) for step 2. The last step is to check that the increase in \( R^2 \) is significant.

### 1.4.7.4 ANOVA

This statistical test assesses the effect of one or more independent variables on one or more dependent variables. ANOVA is adopted to find out if stress experienced by the IAS officers is significantly different across the different career stages. Further to examine the differences in stress experienced between two career stages, Duncan’s test is adopted. In this procedure, the homogeneous groups are defined. The means of the independent variables pertaining to each career stage are listed in their corresponding homogeneous groups.

### 1.4.8 Operational Definition

#### 1.4.8.1 Career stages

The officers are distinguished into three stages. They are the early, mid and late career stages (Rabinowitz and Hall 1981). The first fifteen years is seen as the early career stage (21-35). The next ten years is seen as mid career stage (36-46). And the remaining period until retirement is considered as the late career stage (47-58).
1.4.9 Limitations of the study

The major limitation of the study is the low response rate. Had the response rate to the questionnaire been higher, the results may be more representative. The study is based on the perceptions of the IAS Officers of the Tamil Nadu Cadre. The findings are based on the responses provided by the officers. The subjectivity of the responses is a limitation in itself.

1.4.10 Chapterization

Chapter one introduces the research problem, importance of the study and the methodology applied in conducting the research. The limitations of the study are discussed. A brief note on the contents of each chapter is also given.

Chapter two reviews the literature. Both theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the current study is reviewed.

Chapter three provides a discussion on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis and the Multiple Moderator Regression Analysis.

Chapter four discusses the differences observed with regard to role stress experienced by the officers in the early, mid and the late career stages.

Chapter five presents the major findings of the study. Stress management initiatives and training interventions are discussed in the light of these findings. Direction for future research is also suggested.