CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The existence of human beings cannot be separated from stress, since it as integral a part of life as is breathing. It is a motivator and is important for survival and progress when stress is in it’s productive form but when it is non-productive stress it starts eating away the peace of mind, efficiency and health. The problem of excessive stress is not new and is known to be the cause of the serious problems like anxiety and depression resulting in loss of man days and productivity. Stress and inability to cope with it also results in loss of effectiveness at the work place and it is extremely important to find out the stressors so that methods to cope with stress can be devised and implemented for the benefit of the people.

While stress and it’s consequences have been studied well and in depth it is a matter of intrigue to uncover the relationship stress has with the work place and the role the person is performing. The stress levels have been found to be lesser among employees in certain companies compared to other ones in the same field. The companies wherein the stress levels are found to be higher among employees will tend to benefit if it is brought to notice of human resource professionals who in turn with higher authorities can together work on identifying the causes and plugging them. This could improve efficiency and productivity and prevent attrition. Even otherwise a responsible organization should always try to give the best of working environment to it’s employees. In fact next to providing safe and accident-proof environment, companies should focus upon reducing stress levels among the employees.

The organizations which have stress free atmosphere have much better loyalty and sense of ownership among employees and lower rates of attrition. Not only that the productivity is better but the work-life balance of the staff is better, because personal and work life is entwined. It is noted that companies which have better awareness and have made systematic provisions for a stress free environment also work towards equipping the staff better so as to cope with individual stress because they believe a person stressed in his personal life can bring stress to the work place. Many a companies have started employing psychologists to help the employees. These ‘enablers’ are supposed to identify employees with higher level of stress, understand what is keeping them tense and enable them to cope with stress better.
If one has to look at the success of an organization, it would be agreed upon that an organization is flanked between two uncertainties – market which is uncertain and the people, who also are uncertain. Since there is not much one can do about the uncertainties of the market because it is ‘outside’ the organization, what must be attempted is to invest in people and their development.

Indian pharmaceutical industry has more than 20,000 registered companies and is highly fragmented. It’s expansion has been drastic in last two decades. With approximately 250 large units and 8000 small scale units, the 70% of India’s requirements in this sector is taken care of. By volume of the products manufactured, Indian pharmaceutical industry ranks third in the world. It is showing a robust growth of about 15% per annum and is likely to reach around US$ 30 billion by 2020.

The budgets for training and development of the sales force are no more what they used to be and as a result the people are left to perform all on their own with their own abilities, competence and self learning. The business is growing and the targets are to be achieved which many a times results in the staff work harder rather than working smarter. The nature of work has changed over a period of time, with the sales people trying to strike a balance between their primary professional responsibility of conveying information related superiority of their products, and instead the focus has shifted to gratification and doctor-appeasement.

1.1 The Study

The researcher has done the study on sales executives and managers working for three different types of pharmaceutical companies for the purpose of finding out the commonalities and differences among the participants, for their interpersonal needs, the types of stress that they suffer from and also the coping styles adopted by them. The companies operating in India, for the purpose of facilitating insights into this research, have been categorised into MNCs – Multinational companies, Established Indian companies and Startup ventures. MNCs are principally are governed by their parent companies which try to maintain uniformity in policies
in all the countries they operate. Indian companies which have been in the business for long and started their operations primarily in India, on the other hand are more flexible. The decisions for changes required in approach and policies are much faster. The Startups are those companies which are mostly Indian in origin, are trying to build business from scratch and are struggling to come up to make a recognition in the market.

India has competent managerial and technical talent among the personnel and the skilled workforce can be chosen. English is an advantage and the people who have taken up sales jobs are educated. The manufacturing, research and functional areas other than sales and marketing have good talent pool but the quality of the people working as the sales force has declined over the last two decades. There are many reasons that can be attributed to this phenomenon. Pharmaceutical selling three decades back used to be a well paying job and with good job esteem. With other new industries emerging the talent got attracted to the banking, mutual fund, insurance, finance and retail industries. The increasing competition resulted in many companies choosing gratification and unethical practices to win over doctors. The professionalism, the job esteem and also the remuneration packages for the sales people declined and it is difficult to attract talent towards the industry. This study is aimed at identifying the factors with intent to help bridge the gap between what is prevailing and the ideal. With the help of the observations of those factors which are different in the three categories of companies, the study seeks to suggest to the pharmaceutical companies methods that can bring down stress among the sales executives and managers and help them perform better.