CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
From time immemorial man works to live and lives to work. Man and work are thus so closely intertwined. Work is central in his life. It gives meaning and determines his style of life. But work is not all that pleasant all the time for all the people. Execution of any piece of work inevitably intends exertion of some amount of energy both physical and mental. This exertion creates some degree of tension, force, in the individual called 'Stress'. As long as this force is within the tolerable limits of the individual it leads to his effective functioning. Insufficient tension makes the individual rust-out while excessive tension beyond the individual's tolerable limits leaves him burn-out. Thus stress at work plays an unquestionably important role in workers life.

Several internal and external factors operate on the individual's work efficiency. While employees cognitive potentialities, motivations, expectations, personality dispositions etc. can be named internal, factors related to job like nature of work, monetary benefits, organizational climate etc., are external. Interactional effects of these internal and external factors crystallize in the experience of positive or negative job attitudes and perceptions among the incumbents. Review of psychological literature shows evidence of a spate of studies pertaining to the causes and consequences of three of the most important job attitudes—job involvement, job satisfaction and job stress.
Job involvement refers to the level of identification of the incumbent with his job and job satisfaction refers to his experience of positive affect regarding his job. Many studies reported a positive relation between the two. It is easy to appreciate such a relation as a person deriving high satisfaction in his job would involve himself much more in it and vice versa. However, this need not be a universal phenomenon. There may be individuals who are highly satisfied with all or some aspects of their job and find no reason to involve themselves in work to that extent. On the other hand, it could also be true with some people that they may be highly involved in their job for various reasons other than the satisfaction or no satisfaction they derive from the job. Such findings may be limited. Results of many studies established a positive relation between the two variables.

Another variable that also found closely associated with these is job stress. Job stress which needs to be individually defined is the incumbents experiences of tension beyond the minimal level required in the execution of his job or with any job related aspect. The negative consequences of excessive experiences of job stress, very well documented in the literature, draws the attention of researchers to explore its etiological factors and measures of control.
Many studies in the literature showed the evidence of its negative relation with job satisfaction and job involvement. Nevertheless, under certain conditions for inexplicable or unexplored personal or other factors there may be exceptions to the well established empirical evidence. In addition to job satisfaction and job involvement there are many variables like differences in the organizational sectors, job level and age of the incumbents, perceptions of their organizational climate, their locus of control etc., influencing the experiences of job stress. The term occupational stress is most often used synonymously and interchangeably with job stress.

Organizational climate refers to the perceptions of incumbents toward their work atmosphere, formal organizational structure, management policies and standards etc. Positive perceptions of organizational climate of the incumbents are reported to be enhancing their job satisfaction and job involvement and reducing job stress.

Organizations differ in several aspects like structure, pay and employees welfare measures, administrative policies and processes etc., depending upon the sector to which they belong. Organizations under each sector are subject to diverse pressures at many levels from the government, political bureaucracy, competitors in the market and the like. Beyond all this, the public sector organizations provide good job security and the extension of
several employee welfare measures not strictly linked with their work efficiency and performance. Once entrance is sought in the public sector concerns to a large extent the chances of his dismissal from it till his proper retirement are very much limited. On the other hand under private sector in addition to relatively low salaries and job insecurity, close supervision and evaluation of incumbents performance from time to time prevails as monetary benefits, promotional opportunities etc., are made contingent upon their efficient performance. To this extent punishments and dismissal rates from the job are more in this sector in contrast to that of public sector. There is another sector, cooperative sector, in which both state and private government cooperatively manage the organizations. It does not assure job security till their retirement and extends limited benefits to its employees. Being managed by elected board of directors and their team under the governance of government officers, the cooperative sector employment provides a different job situation which is more similar to that of private sector. In terms of productivity also cooperative sector is more on par with private sector.

The professional and popular media point out that despite the implicit assurance of job continuance and other benefits available to employees in public sector, their performance is considerably inferior to that of other sector employees. In view of the prevailing diversities in organizations from different sectors it would be interesting
to study the job attitudes, experiences and perceptions of organizational climate of the incumbents in different job levels and age groups.

Work in organizations is many fold that needs to be carried out variably and efficiently by teams of individuals at different levels in the job hierarchy. Thus individuals at different job levels do undertake the responsibility of several aspects of organizational work. As such depending upon their responsibilities in the organizational structure do executives, supervisors, and workers differ in their job experiences? Not many Indian or Western studies have taken this aspect for thorough examination.

Several studies in gerontological literature effects in job related experiences and behaviour. As individuals pass through young adulthood to middle adulthood many differences in their personal life as well as occupational life could be evidenced. In the course of time the young entrant in the job would be transformed into experienced and mature middle aged with improved work and interpersonal skills also. With the relaxations attained at the home front from many of the domestic restraints experienced in young adulthood like settling in marriage, portraying the role of parent of growing children etc., job becomes central to life to the middle aged. And now they strive to establish still firmly, grow and develop by investing their ego in it. Therefore, significant differences may be expected in the job
experiences and job behaviour of the incumbents in different age groups.

Locus of control, an important personality construct, differentiates individuals into two groups—internals and externals. Internals are those who have faith in their own capabilities and potentialities and attribute the end result to their own doing. In contrast to that, externals attribute the results of their efforts to any other external agents like their fate, luck or involvement of significant others, etc. Are differences in peoples' locus of control capable of influencing their job behaviour and experiences also? Not many studies in the literature appear to be answering this. Therefore, it would be interesting to study the experiences of stress and coping behaviour of the internals and externals to stress in the Indian context.

Individuals show several kinds of coping behaviour to stress. But are they related to their job attitudes and experiences? Are they individual or situation specific or products of combination of both? How do individuals in different age levels cope with varied job situations in different sectors and job levels? Very few Indian or Western studies, if any, in the available literature addressed themselves to answer these satisfactorily. As knowledge acquired in this regard would help us predict and control maladaptive coping to stress and plan for intervention modules to strengthen more adaptive coping
styles to stress the need to conduct a study on these lines was felt. Against this backdrop the present study was planned to consider occupational stress and coping styles among employees in different cultures.