Chapter 3

Literature Review
Public sector organizations are often called strategic organization. Insurance sector has played a strategic role in national development. Its role has been critical in promoting savings, capital formation and providing social security to Indian populace. Insurance sector has to play a greater role in view of population growth, globalisation of insurance business and a possible threat of competition. The human resource is the most valuable assets for any organization. Issues related to human resources are key determinants to the success of public sector insurance companies. This study aimed at finding out the insurance industry human resources issues that create stress prone work culture.

Before embarking on exploration of a potentially explosive problem of stress among insurance sector professionals, it is pertinent to review the related studies on this phenomenon. In this chapter stress related studies have been discussed under three groups. First group covers studies in which attempts have been made to assess differences in nature of stress among public and private sector professionals. Second part of the study covers
some American and European studies. The last part includes studies pertaining to particular organizations and occupational groups.

3.1 The Stress Studies Pertaining to Public Sector and Private Sector

In India, a number of studies are available that have tried to assess the problem of job related stress. Pestonjee (1999) while analyzing stress among special occupational groups reviewed more than 15 studies on this subject. Many of these studies have used the occupational role stress (ORS) developed by a team of researchers at Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Ahmedabad. ORS has evolved as a potent tool to scientifically assess the problem of stress in an organization. Some ORS-Scale (Pareek, 1983) based studies are mentioned below.

**Sharma (1987)** targeted managers and supervisors of public and private pharmaceutical organization for his study. His aim was to ascertain the role of motivational climate on four psychological variables - job satisfaction, participation, alienation and role stresses. In this study the MAO-C (Pareek, 1989), S-D Inventory (Pestonjee, 1973), ORS Scale (Pareek, 1983c), Psychological Participation Index (Singh & Pestonjee, 1978) and Alienation Scale (Dutt and Kureshi, 1976) were administered on sample of 150 respondents including 75 managers and 75 supervisors.

The findings indicated that the employees of private sector organisation scored higher and significantly differed from those of public organization on inter role distance, role expectation conflict, role erosion, role isolation, personal inadequacy, and resource inadequacy. However, public sector employees scored higher on role stagnation. The study also found that supervisors of public sector organization scored significantly higher on role stagnation, role ambiguity and resource inadequacy than managers of
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public sector organization. Further, managers in the public sector scored significantly higher than supervisors of public sector on role erosion and role overload. The key explanatory variable of role stress was found in form of dependency climate in the public sector organization and control climate in the private sector organization. This study concentrated on two pharmaceutical companies only. The researcher, therefore, suggested the need to conduct similar research on other organization with a larger sample. The author concluded that to foster a more positive attitude among employees, the organizations should have a perfect blend of achievement, expert influence and affiliation.

Ahmad, Bhardwaj and Narula (1985) conducted a survey of stress among executives. A group of 30 executives from each sectors (public and private) were compared on ten dimensions of role stress. Study revealed significant differences on three dimensions-namely, role isolation, role ambiguity and self-role distance. Background factors like age, education, income, experience and marital status of executives were found insignificant with role stress in both the groups.

P.K. Jha and C. Bhardwaj (1989) carried out an empirical study of stress and motivations of the front line managers. 120 junior level managers were randomly selected from different organizations (public and private both). It was observed that private sector managers scored more than public sector managers on achievement need and total motivation factor. Service oriented managers scored high on all the needs and total motivations. Motivation and stress were positively co-related for managers in the private sector.

Sehgal (1997) studied the effect of role stress on level of involvement, the person has in the job and alienation, and coping mechanisms used by
him/her to deal with stress. The study included 222 executives belonging to junior, middle and senior levels in a large public sector organization. It used a set of four instruments – ORS scale (Pareek, 1983c), the job involvement scale (Kanungo, 1981), the Alienation Scale (Kureshi and Dutt, 1979) and Role PICS (Pareek, 1983).

The study noted that the role erosion, resource inadequacy and inter-role distance were dominant contributors of role stress for the total sample. Junior and middle level executives scored lower on total ORS as compared to top-level executives. The analysis of the results indicated that the total ORS was co-related positively and significantly with despair (powerlessness), unstructured universe (normlessness), and psychological vacuum (meaninglessness) variants of alienation. The study also established that the senior level executives experienced more role expectation conflict while middle level executives reported higher role stagnation and junior level executives experienced relatively higher role isolation and self-role distance.

Dwivedi (1997) assessed the magnitude of trust, distrust and occupational role stress (ORS) to determine the extent of relationship among public and private sector organisation. The researcher also tested trust, distrust and ORS consistency across the ‘low’ and ‘high’ performance organizations. This study covered 55 executives from public sector and 62 executives from private sector. The ORS-Scale (Pareek, 1983c) and Trust-Distrust Industrial Scale (Dwivedi, 1995) were administered to the respondents.

The study found that in high performance organization, stress levels were found to be low whereas in low performance organization, stress levels were reported to be high. The trust measures had positive impact on organizational performance whereas distrust and role stress variables had negative impact. The study also acknowledged that the trust, distrust and
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role stress variables significantly differentiated the low performance (Public Sector) and high performance (Private Sector) organizations.

**Pattanayak and Mishra (1997)** carried out a comparative assessment of work organizations in old and new public sectors in relation to ORS and quality of worklife (QWL) as an index of organizational effectiveness. The study administered ORS scale (Pareek, 1983c) and Quality of Work life Scale (Jain, 1991) on 800 respondents from old and new public sector organizations. The sample was drawn from service and manufacturing units and executives and non-executives categories. The results showed that the significant differences were observed between the old and new public sector organizations on all the 10 dimensions of organizational role stress and total role stress. The study reported that executives and non-executives differed significantly on all ORS dimensions and total ORS. Further, the production and service employees differed significantly on all the sub-scales of QWL and ORS.

**Pattanayak (2003)** emphasized that to survive and excel in the new economy, the HRD climate is a matter of serious concern in Indian public sector organizations. Hence, the researcher undertook a study on public sector executives and non-executives. The sample consisted of 800 employees from two public sector organization. The study explored the differences, if any, between the sub groups with regard to organizational role stress (ORS) and perception of quality of work life (QWL). This study also aimed at ascertaining the relative importance of QWL variables in explaining ORS. The findings revealed that there were significant differences between the executives of the old and new public sector organizations on a number of ORS as well as QWL dimensions on the findings. This study also proposed HR solutions.
3.2 Studies Abroad

Northwestern National Life Insurance, Minneapolis (1992) carried out a survey in 1992 of nearly 1300 full time employees in a random sample of private companies in the United States. Among other factors the level of hierarchy, income, occupation and gender factors emerged as a dominant stressor. The survey found that stress affects women more than men. Women exhibited greater tendency to report burnout, stress-related illness or even desire to resign from their jobs. The researchers suggested several reasons for this. Women were often paid less than men for their work, even if they had same educational background. Organizations often lack coherent policies to respond to family issues. Single women with children, along with low-paid college graduates, are at highest risk of burnout. Some 50 percent of single women with children reported burnout, compared to 31 percent of married women with children.

Institute of Management / University of Manchester Institute of Science & Technology (UMIST, 1999) conducted Quality of Working Life or QWL survey of a group of 5000 British managers (from director to Junior managers). This study was related to the psychological implication of the Americanization of work in the United Kingdom. It was noticed that the changes toward downsizing, outsourcing, delaying and the like led to substantially increased job insecurity, lowered morale and erosion of motivation and, most important of all, loyalty. Profitability and high rate of productivity have led to changes. The organization lost the right mix of human resource skill and experience. Study also found that 71% respondents reported that long working hours damaged their health. 86% reported that it adversely affected their relationship with their children.
while 79% felt that it damaged their relationship with their partner, and 68% said that long hours reduced their productivity.

**Institute of Social Research (ISR, 1995)** conducted a stress research on workers in European countries. Another study was conducted by. It covered 400 companies in 17 countries representing 8 million workers throughout Europe. The major problems identified in this study were that most European countries showed a substantial decline from 1985 to 1995 in perceived job security, showing the worst decline in employee satisfaction in terms of employment security, dropping from 70% who were satisfied (in terms of job security) in 1985 down to 48% by 1995.

**Hall (1986)** carried out a survey among 532 managers in 36 Western Australian Organization. Largest group consisted of middle level managers. 80% samples were under the 50 years of age. The study found the relationship between stress and illness. Managers under age of 30 felt bureaucratic interference. In addition one fourth of the younger managers expressed confusion regarding line of authority. Out of total respondents, 68% managers who worked between 41 and 60 hours a week felt pressure of the work.

**Schafer et al. (1998)** undertook a longitudinal analysis of a model (K.J. Kiecolt, 1994) of effects of stress in marital interaction on change in depressive symptoms as mediated by unfavorable reflected appraisals, low competency, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. This study randomly selected 98 married couples, interviewed in 1979 and 1992. Two marital interaction stressors were measured: inequity in marital relationship and role disagreement as a type of interpersonal difficulty. The data support the proposed model. Stressors in marital interaction were associated with
unfavorable reflected appraisals that have a direct effect on self-efficacy and an indirect effect on self-esteem.

These studies highlight the importance of gender issues, downsizing, outsourcing, employment security and health & illness contributing to occupational stress in western countries.

3.3 SECTORAL STUDIES

This section covers studies of various sectors and occupational groups. This review aims to evolve a comparative understanding regarding intensity and potential of stress in varied settings and work environments.

3.3.1 Role Stress Among Insurance and Banking Professionals

Pattanayak and Mishra (1997) carried out an extensive study on banking and insurance professionals. In this study organizational climate questionnaire (S. Singh, 1989), the job stress questionnaire and job strain Questionnaire (Singh, 1989) were administered on sample of 200 banking and insurance professionals (100 each from both). The main objective was to explore determinants of organizational climate, job stress and job strain among the employees in these service sectors.

This study found a number of significant relationships among different factors. Findings indicated that the significant differences were observed between banking and insurance employees with regard to role conflict and experience in inequity. Significant differences were also found between younger and older employees on the dimensions of experience in inequity and job difficulty and inadequacy of role authority. But no significant differences were found regarding organizational climate between insurance and banking sectors. It also observed that job strain due to latent hostility, depression and physical strain was found to be uniformly distributed in
both banking and insurance sectors. Older employees scored lower on all the three dimensions of job strain as compared to younger employees. The study highlighted the need of recruiting the right type of people for the jobs and attracting high-qualified personnel with high compensation packages.

Srivastava (1991) conducted a research study on the employees of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC). This study covered a sample of 300 employees at supervisory cadre of LIC. The study reported significant positive correlation of various dimensions of role stress with the symptoms of mental ill health. Stress arising from role ambiguity and role stagnation most intensively correlated with anxiety. However, regression analysis showed that the relationship of perceived role stress and mental health is not simple. It is moderated by various personal characteristics of the focal persons and the situational variables.

Singh (1988) conducted a study to examine the modifying effects of coping strategies (avoidance and approach), which employees adopt to deal with their organizational role stress. The sample included 300 employees of supervisory cadre of Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India. The results indicated that employees’ experienced stress due to various inadequacies in their job. This had an adverse effect on their mental health. Employees who experienced high role stress manifested more symptoms of free-floating anxiety, obsessive neurosis, neurotic depression, hysterical neurosis, phobic anxiety and somatic concomitants of anxiety. The findings also revealed that the avoidance coping strategy enhanced mental health, whereas the approach coping strategy alleviated the severity of mental health. Further, the avoidance strategy adopted by the employees to deal with their organizational role stress enhanced the positive relationship between role
stress and mental ill health, whereas the approach mode of coping had a buffering effect on the relationship between role stress and mental ill health.

Choudhary (1990) probed the relationship between role stress and job satisfaction among bank officers. A total 100 bank officers were covered in the study. The study administered ORS scale (Pareek, 1983c) and Employers’ Satisfaction Dissatisfaction Inventory (Pestonjee, 1973b). Statistical tools like critical ratio test and product moment coefficient of correlation were used for analyzing the data. Results showed that role erosion and resource inadequacy were experienced as dominant whereas role ambiguity and role expectation conflict as remote contributors of role stress among bank officers. No significant differences were observed between the two age groups on role stress dimensions. The overall indices of role stress and job satisfaction were found to be negatively correlated in higher as well as lower age groups.

3.3.2 Role Stress in Scientific Research Sector
Roy (1997) undertook a study to examine the relationship between ORS and social support among scientists belonging to Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). The ORS Scale (Pareek, 1983c) and social support Scale (Roy 1997) were administered among 23 junior and 30 senior scientists. Results indicated that junior scientists scored higher and significantly differed from senior scientists on the dimensions of role stagnation, role erosion and resource inadequacy. While senior scientists scored higher on role overload as compared to junior scientists but no significant difference was found. This study opined that there is need for social support from seniors to their juniors.
3.3.3 Role Stress Among Administrative Services Professionals

Parul Rishi, Bal Krishna Upadhyay & Arpita Solanki (2004) attempted to identify different coping strategies used by forest officers while facing multifarious role stressors. Thirty-four forest officers from Bhopal and surrounding areas participated in this study. The study utilized the subjective, objective and projective Role PICS (Pareek, 1983) techniques as per their suitability for extracting different types of information.

The results suggested that there was a positive and significant relationship between stress, avoidance strategies and type A personality. Forest officers having type A personality experienced more role stress and used more avoidance-based strategies to cope with it. Overall, 23.5% of the sample was found to be experiencing a high stress and ineffective coping styles. The study identified work related stress, interference, forestry activity offences, support system, insufficient time for family, hectic tours / field visits and lack of autonomy and decision making power as factors for stress among Indian forest services officers.

3.3.4 Role Stress Among Police Personnel

Singhvi and Mathur (1997) conducted a study on Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officers. The sample consisted of 19 gazetted officers rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) and 32 non-gazetted officers (12 station and 20 non-station postings). The ORS Scale (Pareek, 1983a) was administered on the sample to assess the total stress as also specific role stressors causing stress. Statistical tools like mean, standard deviation, critical ratio test and rank order correlation were used to find out whether gazetted and non-gazetted officers differed significantly in their scores on job stress. The differences for station and non-station and non-gazetted officers were also probed.
The study found that role erosion and inter role distance to be the most dominant whereas role ambiguity and role overload to be the least dominant contributors of role stress. It was found that non-static and non-gazetted officers scored significantly higher on the entire role stress dimensions as compared to gazetted officers and static non-gazetted officers on all the ten dimensions of role stress as well as the total role stress.

Talib (1999) conducted a study to explore the problem of role stress among police personnel. The sample comprised 178 police personnel belonging to two groups viz. civil police and provincial arms constabulary (PAC) from the Uttar Pradesh region. The ORS Scale (Pareek, 1983c) was administered to the sample population to assess overall role stress and ten different role stressors. Statistical techniques like t-test and ANOVA were used to find out the actual differences between civil police and regional para military organization i.e. PAC.

The study found that the inter role distance, resource inadequacy and role erosion were the dominant stressors for the police personnel. More than 42% respondents were found under either medium high or high stress zone. The study also revealed that there was no significant relationship between role stress and variables like age and educational background. Data analysis of subordinate and officers revealed that respondents at subordinate level scored significantly higher on total role stress than officers. The study found that role overload score was high in civil police personnel while PAC emerged as more stressed group. Inter role distance was figured as a most potent stressor for both groups.
3.3.5 Role Stress Among Air Traffic Controllers

*Mishra (1996)* conducted a study to examine the nature of motivational climate, role stress and coping strategies among the air traffic controllers (ATC’s) and to investigate the relationship amongst these variables. It is quite surprising that in India, the problem of stress has not been sufficiently explored in the context of this highly stressful job. The sample included 120 male air traffic controllers working at three major international airports of India. The three psychometric instruments—the MAO-C (Pareek, 1989), the ORS Scale (Pareek, 1983d)—were administered to the sample population to obtain data pertaining to motivational climates, role stresses and coping strategies respectively. Statistical techniques such as ANOVA, coefficients of correlation and stepwise multiple regression analysis were used to analyse the data.

The overall motivational climate was perceived as strong in control and dependency dimension and weak in achievement and extension dimension by air traffic controllers. The study found inter role distance and resource adequacy to be the major reason for role stress. On the other hand, personal inadequacy and role ambiguity were found to be minor contributors of role stress. Further the study observed significant differences among air traffic controllers with respect to their age, education, work experience, marital status and total monthly income regarding their motivational climate, role stress and coping strategies. As far as the coping strategies adopted by the air traffic controllers were concerned, it was found that defensive style was most frequently used coping style. It is important to note that the avoidance strategies were found to be more frequently used than approach strategies. The researcher emphasized the need of special training and more active role of spouses in management of stress among air traffic controllers.
3.3.6 Role Stress Among Information Technology Sector Professionals

Aziz (2003) conducted a research study on information technology (IT) sector professionals. This research study examined a particular type of stress i.e. ‘organizational role stress’ among IT professionals. The sample size was 257. It consisted of 138 male and 119 female employees drawn from eight IT firms based in Delhi and the National Capital Region. The ORS Scale (Pareek, 1983c) was administered to the sample population to assess overall role stress and ten different role stressors.

The study established that the information technology professionals were experiencing a fair amount of role stress. Further the study found that the role stressors that emerged as the top three contributors to overall organization role stress were resource inadequacy, role stagnation and inter role distance. Role ambiguity and role isolation emerged as a least contributor to IT sector professionals.

3.3.7 Role Stress Among Working Women

Srivastava & Srivastava (1985) observed that participation of women in higher education has increased their chances of joining the workforce. Keeping in view the rapidly expanding concept of ‘dual career couple’ in the country, the researchers conducted a study to compare role stresses, marital adjustment, social relations and mental health of dual career and traditional couples. The sample comprised 40 dual career couple and 80 traditional couples. A set of tools – the Role Stress Scale (Rizo et al., 1970), the Mental Health Questionnaire (O.N. Srivastava & V.K. Bhatt, 1974), the Marital Adjustment Questionnaire (Bhatt and Guaba, 1978) and Measures of Social Relations (a subscale of the Employees’ S-D Inventory by Pestonjee, 1973b) were used to the sample. Critical ratio test was used to analyze the data.
The findings indicated that the two categories of couples differed significantly in terms of the variables studied. For example, dual career husbands experienced more role conflicts and role ambiguities than traditional career husbands. Further, dual career couples experienced poorer marital adjustment and social relations which involved more obsessive, neurotic and hysterical traits and symptoms and more phobic and free floating anxiety as compared to traditional couples. The study opined that distress was also caused by the dual career husbands’ loss of status and power associated with their wives bringing money into the family.

Kaila (2004) conducted a study on women managers. This study discussed the responses of a qualitative survey on stress & health aspects of women managers and how they cope with work challenges. The data for the study was collected from 100 women managers using in depth interviews in and out of Mumbai from diverse organizations.

The study found that the factors like clashes with superiors, competition, dual responsibilities, meeting deadlines, lack of support from others, handling different types of clients, long working hours, and internal politics between colleagues emerged as prevailing stressors among working managers. Further, the study suggested that there is need to introduce flexi work schedule, Crêche facility and healthy work environment.

After going through the literature review, it is quite clear that stress research is a popular field of enquiry among social science researchers. A number of studies have been carried out in varied settings and sectors in India and abroad. All aforementioned studies have highlighted different dimension of the stress across varied occupational groups, sectors and national settings. The studies have also proposed various coping strategies. This also hints at further exploration that is still required.
For example the problem of stress has not been sufficiently researched among insurance sector professionals. The researcher therefore felt the need to investigate this sector in depth. The growing importance of this sector from national standpoint necessitates focus on this sector.