Chapter 7

Management of Stress
7.1 Overview of Findings

The study establishes the fact that information technology professionals are facing the problem of organisational role stress. It is also clear that the level of organisational role stress among information technology professionals is comparatively higher vis-à-vis other occupational groups. The stressors that emerge important for information technology sector are resource inadequacy, role stagnation, inter role distance, and personal inadequacy.

The study reports that the different sub groups are suffering from different stressors. For example, the married women are facing the problem of Role Overload more than the other groups. Similarly, the male respondents with working spouses have reported higher inter role distance than any other group, whereas the male respondents with non-working spouses have reported comparatively higher role stagnation.

The different hierarchical levels have also reported differences in the overall organisational stress. Respondents at the higher level in the hierarchy have reported higher inter role distance, role overload, role expectancy conflict. On the other hand, respondents in lower hierarchy have reported higher role stress on role erosion and a slightly more self-role distance.

The analysis of open-ended questionnaire also buttresses the findings arrived at through ORS Scale.
7.2 Impact of Stress on Organisations

Human resource is the most important asset of any organisation. A healthy and committed workforce means increased efficiency and productivity for organisation. The importance of quality human resource cannot be overemphasized in today's knowledge driven business. The human capital has replaced dollar capital and the real value of companies depends more on ideas, insights and information in the heads of their employees than on assembly lines or other physical assets (Toffler & Toffler, 1995). Within this general ambience, World Health Organisation (WHO) predicts that by 2020 depression is expected to emerge as the second largest global factor contributing towards increase in the number of unproductive years in an individual's life (ET (a), 2001). Therefore it has become increasingly important for organisations to adopt and invest in approaches and policies that enhance the health of their employees and keep the level of occupational stress at its optimum.

In India the awareness regarding this occupational hazard is growing only gradually. The far-reaching impact of occupational stress can be assessed from data available for other countries. It is estimated that stress costs US industry over $150 billion a year through absenteeism and reduced levels of performance (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Similarly, it is estimated that in the UK as much as 60 percent of all absenteeism is caused by stress-related disorders (Hindle, 1998,). The total cost of stress to U.K. economy is estimated to be £2 billion per year (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997, 2). According to Xerox Corporation estimates, the cost of losing just one executive to stress-related illness is $600,000.
Many others have illustrated the same by trying to estimate the cost that stress is exacting from the economy (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980; Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987; Jex & Beehr, 1991; Mulcahy, 1991; Aldred, 1994). Slobogin (1977) rightly points that the term stress "has moved from the nether world of 'emotional problems' and 'personality conflicts' to the corporate balance sheet.... Stress is now seen as not only troublesome but expensive".

7.3 Management of Stress

There are two aspects of the management of stress in any organisation. One is the individual effort of the employees to manage stress at a personal level. This effort on the part of an employee to manage stress at individual level is called coping. The second and perhaps the more important aspect is the effort of the organisation to manage stress among its employees. These organisational efforts are called 'organisational interventions' or 'stress management interventions'. Both coping and organisational interventions are equally important for the successful management of stress in any organisational setting.

7.3.1 Coping With Stress

Like the concept of stress itself, various definitions of coping have been proposed. These include coping as a psychoanalytic process; as a personal trait, style, or disposition; as a description of situationally specific strategies; and as a process. Traditionally, coping was conceptualized as stable trait or some enduring behaviour or characteristic of the person (Stone et. al., 1991). However, Lazarus et. al. (1978) have presented coping as thoughts and actions that are
Chapter 7

Management of Stress

initiated in response to a specific encounter and that change over time as efforts are reappraised and outcomes are evaluated. This implies a dynamic interaction between the person and the environment, whereby the individual imposes a particular appraisal on the environment, while the environment is also influential in shaping that appraisal (Dewe & Guest, 1990).

Using the transactional framework, Folkman (1984) defines coping as "cognitive and behavioural efforts to master, reduce or tolerate the internal or external demands that are created by the stressful transaction".

Basically there can be two ways in which an individual copes with stress. The person may suffer silently or deny the experience of stress. This is a passive approach. Alternatively, the person may decide to face the realities of experienced stress and search for solution to the problem through negotiations with other members. This is the active approach. Pareek (1993) has identified two types of coping strategies to handle stress: dysfunctional and functional. Effective coping mechanisms are called approach strategies. In this approach, the person confronts the problem of stress as a challenge. These strategies increase an individual's capability of negotiating stress. On the other hand, ineffective coping mechanisms are 'escape' or 'avoidance' strategies. These strategies try to reduce the feeling of stress by denying its very existence.

7.3.1.1 Coping with Inter Role Distance

Inter role distance refers to the conflict between the organisational and non-organisational roles. It has emerged as a potent stressor for the information technology professionals. It is the third highest
contributor to overall organisational role stress with a mean of 8.27. Older employees have reported more inter role distance (9.68) than their younger counterparts (7.04). The majority of older employees are married. This obviously increases the likelihood of their organisational role clashing with their role as a husband / wife or their role as parents. This conflict creates a feeling of inter role distance. In a study on computer professionals, G. P. Singh (1987) found that systems personnel in private sector scored significantly higher on inter role distance than systems analysts in public sector. Also, the inter role distance was found to be general contributor to role stress in computer professionals. In a study on computer professionals, Pestonjee and Singh (1983) found that inter role distance adversely affected job satisfaction and morale in the areas of job, management, personal adjustment, social relations, fairness of employer’s policies and behaviour, adequacy of immediate leadership and regard for organisation. It also affected employee’s identification with the organisation. In this study, a number of employees complained of their inability to turn off at home. This feeling is especially widespread among women employees. Commutative impact of these feelings results in inter role distance stress.

The dysfunctional approach of dealing with inter role distance may be either role partition or role elimination. Some employees partition the work role and non-work role clearly. Some employees accept one role at the cost of other. This is called role elimination. There are times
when the professional demands are in conflict with the demands of social and family roles. Often, in the initial stages of career, the family and friends don't get the required attention and time. Employee may rationalize this behaviour that he would compensate this loss by making a unique contribution to his organisation. However, this is an avoidance approach. It was found that more women employees resorted to role elimination. In informal interviews, some women employees told that when their children were small they had to forgo some important projects that affected their career prospects. On the other hand, some married women delay child bearing for the sake of their career. Similarly, some unmarried men delay their marriage for the same reason.

A functional approach to the problem may be role negotiation. Role negotiation is the process of establishing the mutuality among roles and getting necessary help to play work and non-work roles more effectively. The employee may negotiate with his spouse and children on how best he can spend time with them. The organisation may help by arranging workshops for the family. This would help the family to better understand the demands of the job. Through this open communication the families may be sensitised towards the job demands and help in successful negotiation of the problem of inter role distance.

Some women employees with small children felt that they would be able to contribute more to the organisation if crèche facility is provided at the workplace itself. This would give them the satisfaction
that their children are in close physical proximity as also they are in safe hands. Organisations may help by adopting ‘Career-Break Scheme’. Studies found that less than 7% of women in the United Kingdom return to full-time work immediately after maternity leave, but 90% returned after a longer break. It means that women want to spend more time with their infants even beyond their period of maternity leave. This prompted NatWest Bank (UK) to introduce the scheme that allows employees to take longer career breaks without any loss of seniority. The scheme has proved to be so successful that The Law Society (UK) has suggested that those operating such a scheme should advertise themselves as “a career break employer”, similar to claims by many organisations that they are “equal opportunity employers” (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997).

Another innovative work arrangement that could be used to reduce inter role distance is ‘Sabbaticals’. A number of organisations in Sweden have institutionalised the system of up to a year off after a certain period of work. John Lewis group in United Kingdom has introduced a system of 6-month sabbaticals for employees aged 50 or above, with at least 25 years of service. This allows the employees to do things that they enjoy would not otherwise be possible (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997). It would be a good idea if organisations can give shorter sabbaticals to employees with lesser period of service.
7.3.1.2 Coping with Role Stagnation

Role stagnation is the feeling of being stuck in the same role. It results into the perception that there is no opportunity for one's career progression.

It has also emerged as a major stressor for information technology professionals. It is the second highest contributor to overall organisational role stress with a mean of 8.83. Pestonjee and Singh (1987) studied the stress-strain relationship for systems analysts and managers of both public and private sector organisations. They found that private sector systems analysts scored significantly higher on role stagnation. The problem of role stagnation occurs when an individual gets into a new role as a result of his advancement in the organisation. He may apprehend that new role requires skills that he does not possess. Some organisations may not have a systematic manpower development strategy. Employees working in such organisation may thus experience this when they are promoted. In such situation, he may continue to play the previous role about which he is sure and comfortable, and he was performing successfully. This is called role fixation. This is an avoidance strategy.

A functional approach to resolve this conflict is role transition. Role transition is the process by which a previous role, however successful and satisfying it may have been, is given up to take up a new and more developed role. For taking up new roles often involves upgradation of skills.
7.3.1.3 Coping with Role Expectation Conflict

Role expectation conflict is the conflict in the expectations or demands by the different role senders. One way to deal with role expectation conflict stress is to eliminate those expectations from the role that are likely to be in conflict with others’ expectations. This is the process of role shrinkage. It is the act of pruning the role in such a way that some expectations are given up. Role shrinkage may help avoid the problem. However, this is a dysfunctional approach as it restricts the performance of a larger role, which has its own obvious disadvantages.

The approach strategy for dealing with this conflict is establishing linkages with other roles. Devising some new ways of negotiating conflicting expectations may solve the problem of role expectation conflict. The organisations may help by owning the responsibility of helping employees. This would help the role occupant to experience both the process of growth as well as satisfaction. However, in case of information technology, role expectation conflict does not emerge as potent stressor and as such specific efforts are not required to cope with this stressor.

7.3.1.4 Coping with Role Erosion

The problem of role erosion suggests that the role occupant feels that the functions he would like to perform are being performed by some other role. Role erosion does not emerge as a potent stressor among information technology professionals. It creates a
subjective feeling that some important expectations that he has from the role are shared or taken away by other role within the role set. The usual reaction in such a situation may be that the individual fights for the rights of the role. However, this may not solve the problem as the basic conflict may continue.

Interventions that help role occupants recognise and increase the significance of their role are required. The development of role in such a way that it results in enrichment of the job may be more useful. Also, individuals can identify areas where they are lacking and try to upgrade their skills so that they can perform those roles.

7.3.1.5 Coping with Role Overload

Role overload is a feeling of too many or too difficult expectations from several sources. The feeling of role overload has emerged as a major stressor among certain groups in the study. There is a significant difference in the reported role overload between married and unmarried employees. The married employees have reported significantly higher role overload than unmarried employees. Further, within the married employees, the women employees have reported significantly higher role overload than men. As discussed earlier, women still shoulder the major responsibility for family and household activities, especially those related to child rearing. This definitely results in higher role overload for married women. Also, within married male employees, the husbands with
working spouses have reported significantly higher role overload than married men with housewives.

When faced with the problem of role overload, the role occupant may prepare a list of functions in terms of priorities. The prioritization may help place things in order of importance. In the process, there is likelihood that the less familiar or less comfortable roles may be pushed lower down in the priority list and neglected. The job profile of information technology professionals is changing rapidly. As a result, new roles are being added to existing roles. However, the role occupant may prefer to perform such functions that he may do without much effort. Functions that are new and emerging may remain at lower level of priority and may thus remain neglected. This approach is dysfunctional and is an avoidance strategy.

There are two aspects of role overload: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative overload occurs when the quantity of work expected (output) is at variance with that person's perception of how much he/she can handle efficiently. About 56 percent of the respondents covered in the study cited workload as a source of stress. A functional approach to dealing with quantitative overload may be attempted through redefinition of roles. Aspects of the roles, amenable to delegation, may be identified. They may be delegated to another person in the role set after necessary training. This will ensure the growth of both persons. This process is called role slimming. The role does not lose its vitality in the process of delegating some functions. Another aspect of
quantitative overload is lack of equitable distribution of work. This unequal distribution may be from organisation or may also be due to free riders. The overload due to free riders is particularly a cause of concern in team based tasks / projects. Many IT jobs also require teamwork. When some conscientious employees shoulder most of work related assignment in a team they are likely to experience role overload.

There would be other ways of tackling the problem of role overload among different classes of employees. In Europe companies have realised the need to rethink the working arrangements for career couples. Such alternatives help working women, particularly with children, to juggle the demands of both job and family and have proved to be quite successful (Lewis & Cooper, 1989).

'V-Time' (Voluntary reduced time) is one such arrangement. This system gives option to full time employees to reduce working hours for a specified period with a reduction in salary. It combines the benefits of both part time work as well as full time job as it is temporary arrangement and the employee's right to return to full time work is guaranteed. In such an arrangement all benefits are maintained, usually at a pro-rata basis. The time off may be taken by working shorter days or weeks; or a block of time may be taken (may be during school holidays). For example, the Alliance & Leicester Building Society allows time off during the holidays for those with children between the age of 5 and 14. Such arrangement may also be used to
learn new skills or may be responding to a health problem (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997).

The other dimension of role overload is qualitative overload. Qualitative overload occurs when individuals believe that they do not have the necessary skills or capacity to satisfactorily perform the job. The technology and systems are changing at a rapid pace in information technology sector. Consequently, the profile of information technology professionals is undergoing a change. This naturally requires a more adept handling. There is pressing need for identifying training requirements at different levels of the hierarchy. Training is required on different dimensions: skill upgradation, knowledge and attitude. There is a need of a judicious mix of these three elements for different hierarchical levels.

7.3.1.6 Coping with Role Isolation

Role isolation is the feeling of tension and distance between two roles in an organisation. Role isolation does not emerge as a problem among information technology professionals. The role occupant may negotiate this problem by playing his role efficiently but avoiding interaction with others. The role occupant thus confines himself to his own role. This is called role boundedness. This strategy averts possible conflict. This is a dysfunctional strategy, as it does not help the individual play his role in the larger interest of the organisation. Such employees may become a problem, as they cannot work on team-based projects, an increasing possibility as
well as necessity in information technology jobs. The
distrust among various roles may be extremely harmful
for the organisation. The nature of work in information
technology field requires open communication as time is
of prime importance in completion of projects.

A better approach strategy for tackling this stress is
developing *role linkages*. There is need for open
communication among various levels of hierarchy. In
order to be effective in today’s competitive environment,
group cohesiveness and communication has to be of an
exceptionally high order. If an employee feels isolated
then he will not put in extra effort. He is likely to
perform the job in a routine manner, thus lowering group
effectiveness and morale. If some of the sub groups are
experiencing the conflict they may be specifically
mentioned here.

### 7.3.1.7 Coping with Personal Inadequacy

Personal inadequacy represents a feeling of lack of
knowledge, skills or adequate preparation to be effective
in a particular role. Personal inadequacy has emerged as
a source of concern for information technology sector. It
has emerged as a major stressor for senior employees:
subject in terms of both age and experience. Another
group that has reported comparatively higher level of
personal inadequacy are those employees who are in the
lower education group. This indicates perceived feeling
of lack of requisite competencies for effective job
performance. When faced with such a situation, the
employees may resort to *role shrinkage*. The employees
may start performing only such roles that they are capable of performing.

Information technology professionals are called upon to perform variety of jobs. There are some routine jobs but there are significant number of jobs that have an element of challenge. Every new project offers fresh challenges. This often demands newer skills. The changing job profile needs constant training at some level or the other. Employees can try to improve their skills on their own. However, for overall organisational effectiveness it is imperative that some steps are taken at the organisational level as well. The organisations need to make effort to not only identify the current but also future training and development needs of different groups of employees. This would equip their employees to face newer challenges. At the same time, if employees, too, have some idea as to what are organisations expectations in future, they would themselves be better prepared for possible future assignments and responsibilities.

### 7.3.1.8 Coping with Self Role Distance

Self-role distance represents a conflict between the role incumbent's self-concept and the demands of role he occupies. When faced with the feeling of self-role distance, the role occupant may play that role in a routine way to earn his living. He may not take real interest in his role. This implies rejection of role. Alternatively the role occupant may seriously occupy his role and in due course of time completely forget his self-concept. He may then reject his self. In either case it is
an avoidance approach. If an individual rejects role, he is likely to be ineffective. However, if he rejects the self, he is likely to lose his effectiveness as an individual. This would be inappropriate for his mental health.

An approach or functional strategy of dealing with this stress is to attempt role integration. The individual may analyse aspects of the role causing self-role distance. He may then identify some aspects of the role in which he may use his strengths. An attempt may be made to grow into the role and make the role grow to use the special capabilities of the person. This would result in role integration. If this happens then the individual gets the satisfaction of occupying a role which is closer to his self-concept. Though difficult, with systematic efforts the integration can be achieved.

Self-role distance does not emerge as a major contributor to organisational role stress among information technology professionals. The mean score for self-role distance is 5.84 which is very much on the lower side.

7.3.1.9 Coping with Role Ambiguity

Role Ambiguity refers to conflict between various expectations that people have from the role occupant. This may occur due to lack of information available to the role occupant or due to inability to understand the cues available to him. Role ambiguity may be in relation to the activities, priorities, norms or general expectations.

Role ambiguity does not emerge as a contributor to overall organisational role stress among information
technology professionals. In fact, role ambiguity is the least contributor to the overall stress with a mean score of 4.89. An earlier study on computer professionals also found role ambiguity to be remote contributor of role stress among managers, systems personnel and operation personnel in both public and private sector (Singh, 1987). For tackling role ambiguity the usual approach is to make the roles clear by putting various things in black and white. This is called role prescription. The various expectations are defined more clearly. On the contrary, the individual may remove role ambiguity by fitting into the role as described in some expectations. This is the process of role taking. However, both these strategies are avoidance strategies.

An approach strategy may be to seek clarification from various sources and to define the role in the light of such clarifications. A better approach is to define the role according to one's own strengths. The role occupant may be helped to look into aspects of the role that he finds challenges. This is the process of role making. Open communication is key to removing role ambiguity as often role ambiguity develops because of lack of communication or communication gap between different hierarchies.

7.3.1.10 Coping with Resource Inadequacy

It is the feeling of perceived lack of resources required for effective performance, such as information, people, material, finance, facilities, support, etc.
Resource inadequacy has emerged as the most potent source of organisational role stress among information technology professionals. It has emerged as the number one contributor to the overall organisational role stress among information technology professionals with a mean score of 8.96. In an earlier study on computer professionals, Pestonjee and Singh (1987) also found resource inadequacy to be dominant contributor of role stress among managers and systems analysts in private sector and public sector organisations. Information technology sector has been one of the fastest growing sectors of the Indian economy for some time (Mishra, 2002). As mentioned earlier, the rapid expansion of the sector resulted in a disturbed demand-supply equilibrium. The employees who joined information technology sector may find it difficult to keep pace with the fast changing information technology sector. This is borne out by the fact that more experienced employees (both men and women) have reported higher level of resource inadequacy than employees with limited experience. Similarly, top hierarchy has reported higher resource inadequacy than lower hierarchy. The ever-changing nature of information technology demands constant upgradation of skills. This requires constant efforts on the part of the employees to keep learning new skills. But it is very difficult to achieve this at the level of the employees. It is only through some organisational efforts that employees can keep pace with the changes. The need of training and development is thus paramount in any information technology organisation. As mentioned earlier, the study was done at a time when the
growth rate was somewhat slowed, thus putting a break on investment in training. Also, the salaries were curtailed, thus further strengthening the perceived lack of resources on the part of the employees. All this may have combined to generate the feeling of resource inadequacy among information technology professionals.

As a group women employees have reported higher level of resource inadequacy as compared to men. Also, married employees have reported comparatively higher stress than unmarried employees. That perceived lack of resources is high among married employees is understandable. Married employees have usually somewhat more responsibilities than unmarried employees. Also, they have to manage their efforts and time between job and family. Often, the most important commodity for such employees is time, which is short in supply.
7.3.2 Stress Management Interventions

The organisations too need to initiate measures to tackle stress among employees. The measures that are taken at organisational level are called ‘organisational interventions’ or ‘stress management interventions’.

7.3.2.1 What Organisations can do?

a) Recognise stress as an organisational problem,

b) Monitor stress signs and isolate potent stressors,

c) Introduce stress management interventions targeting specific stressors, and

d) Constant evaluation, improvement / change in interventions if required.

7.3.2.1a Recognise Stress as an Organisational Problem

Often organisations take the view that stress is not their problem but an individual problem (Davies, 1973, 3). The first step towards management of organisational stress is the recognition that stress is also an organisational problem and not merely an individual’s problem.

Despite widespread acknowledgment of the detrimental impact of stress on individuals and as a consequence on organisations, the amount of attention given by organisations towards understanding the causes of organisational stress and taking measures to ameliorate stress from work settings has been limited. There are many reasons for this lack of action on the part of organisations: (a) managers’ perceptions and beliefs about the impact of the work environment on levels of employee strain and well being (Cartwright, Cooper, & Murphy, 1995), (b) managers
Figure 7.1 What Organisations can do?

1. Recognise stress as an organisational problem.
3. Isolate potent stressors.
4. Introduce stress management interventions targeting specific stressors.

Constant evaluation and improvement / change in interventions if required.
beliefs about who is responsible for managing individual employees' levels of strain (Cooper, Dewe, & O'Driscoll, 2001), and (c) the costs associated with making organisation level changes compared with those related to teaching individuals to cope more effectively (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994; Daniels, 1996; Murphy, 1988).

7.3.2.1b Monitor Stress Signs

Organisations ought to be on constant lookout for subtle signs and signals that employees provide when under stress. According to Worksafe, Western Australia, (Edworthy, 2000) there are four areas that may indicate that employees in the organisation are suffering from stress. It is recommended that organisations should look for these signs that may signal rising stress levels in the organisation: (1) **Performance at work**: There is a distinct decline in output or productivity with no clear reason; Error rates increase and there is excessive wastage; Workflow and planning deteriorate; Deadlines are not met; The standard of decision making becomes poor or nonexistent. (2) **Employee morale**: Motivation decreases and commitment to organisation declines; An increase in time at work does not lead to improved results; Internal sabotage may occur. (3) **Relationship at work**: A team spirit is difficult to maintain; Tension between colleagues increases and decisions become harder to reach; Industrial relations deteriorate. (4) **Sickness absenteeism**: Vague illnesses increase; Breaks from work increase; Late arrivals and early departure becomes more frequent.

A very important part of monitoring is **Stress Audit**. Stress Audit refers to the attempt that organisations make to
study, explore and control various stresses encountered by organisational members. It helps generate data. The data thus generated could be a useful starting point for identifying the problem areas in an organisation. Organisational role stress scale is a good instrument for identifying role based stress problems in an organisation.

7.3.2.1c Introducing Stress Management Interventions (SMI)

Once it is accepted that stress is detrimental to organisational performance and the specific stressors are isolated, the next step should be to introduce stress management interventions. The approaches can be initiated at different levels and differentiated by the scope of the intervention, its target and underlying assumptions.

Primary Interventions

Primary interventions are 'source interventions' i.e. interventions through which organisation tries to remove the sources that cause stress. The aim is to reduce the number and/or intensity of stressors. The target is to alter work environment through alteration in organisational structure, organisational culture, technology and processes. The underlying philosophy is that prevention is better than cure. This is the most proactive approach and is effective if implemented systematically (Burk, 1993; Murphy, 1988). The importance of primary interventions has been strongly emphasised by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the United States. According to NIOSH (1988, Pp. 6-7), "A preventive
strategy for health disorders must take account of both causal mechanisms and factors that perpetuate the disorders. Generic approaches tend to focus on the interplay of host, agent, and contextual factors".

But it is extremely important that primary interventions are implemented only after careful examination of specific stressors in the organisation as they often call for major changes. The primary focus is on modifying, changing or adapting the physical or socio-political environment of the organisation to conform to the needs and wants of the employees. Examples could be changing organisational structure, changing job roles, establishing more equitable reward system, increasing employee autonomy over job functions (Elkin & Rosch, 1990) changing working environment, job redesign, changing or modifying performance appraisal tools, etc.

Primary interventions are difficult to introduce as also costly. It is not only difficult but also time consuming to introduce such interventions as it may require changing organisational structure or changing working environment and giving more training to employees. At times such an exercise may even become controversial because often it involve changes that managers may deem as reducing their power over subordinates such as changing job roles or greater employee autonomy in decision making. Changes at this level require commitment from the top management. Still, steps like job redesign or changing or modifying performance appraisal tools can be introduced at comparatively lower cost in terms of money, effort and time.
Secondary interventions

The secondary interventions are basically 'moderating interventions'. The scope can be both preventive and/or reactive. The aim is to modify/moderate individual response to stressors. The aim is also to enhance individual's stress tolerance capacity. The underlying philosophy is that it is not always possible to totally reduce and/or remove stressors, so the individual should also be fortified against stressors. Examples can be giving stress information, stress training, spouse involvement programmes (SIP), employee "wellness" programmes. Moderating interventions are easy to implement and less costly also.

Stress aggravates when are reluctant to admit that they are suffering from stress. This generally happens because of fear that it will be taken as a sign of weakness. There are apprehensions about the adverse impact upon career prospects. According to Frank Davies (1997, 3), "people can be too frightened to admit that they are under stress, perhaps because they associate it within the stigma of mental illness or because people see it as a sign of some kind of weakness". The first step is to provide employees knowledge about stress. Knowledge helps employees understand the problem and helps them realise that stress is not some 'mental' illness and there is no harm in accepting it and seeking professional advice and help.

Spouse should be involved so that he/she can better appreciate job difficulties and challenges and employees get better home atmosphere as social support is acknowledged to have moderating impact on stress by...
increasing resistance to stress (Antonovsky, 1979; Cobb, 1976).

Tertiary Interventions

Tertiary interventions are ‘damage control’ and start when some damage has already been done. The aim is to minimise the harmful consequences of stressors by helping employee to cope more effectively. The underlying philosophy is that it is better late than never. Examples can be employee assistance programmes, counselling, actual treatment.

As evident from its name, these are last resort interventions. It is very difficult to institutionalise these interventions because by this stage normally employee is shown the door. Although initially organisations may provide assistance to employees but usually it is thought prudent to simply get rid of the “problem employee” than to further invest in him.

All the three levels of interventions can be initiated at the same time or only one or two can be initiated at a time depending on the need of the organisation and availability of resources. Whatever the level, the interventions should comprised of three components: Psychological, Physical and Nutritional.

The most important part of any stress management intervention is the psychological component. Be it the effort to change the organisational culture, structure, job redesign or providing more institutional support to the employees, or providing counselling and actual treatment, all come under the psychological component.
But the other two equally important components that are often missing in stress management interventions are the physical and nutritional components.

Physical fitness can play an important part both in reducing stress and in increasing one's ability to cope with stressful situations. Exercise results not only in better body shape but also improves self-image, provides an outlet for anger and aggressive feelings (Cartwright & Cooper, 1997, 63) and produces positive moods (Lovallo, 1997, 64). Exercise helps in decreasing depression and increasing psychological wellbeing (Gosselin & Taylor, 1999). Exercise produces physiological changes that provide a degree of protection against emotional stress by conditioning the body's stress adaptation mechanism (Pestonjee & Muncherji, 1991, 31). The proverb "healthy body, healthy mind" is no mere cliché. It is a reality. Increasingly, organisations are realising the potential of exercise and introducing physical fitness programmes. i-flex is a good example of an Indian organisation providing advanced health club facilities for employees to cater to their 'mind and body' needs (ET (b), 2001).

Providing such facilities entails some money but the arithmetic is simple. There is definite payoff from investment. Although data is not available for India but the experience of some American companies shows that such programmes have significant monetary benefits for organisations. Aetna provides state-of-the-art health clubs and estimates that employees who exercise cost $282 less per year to insure than employees who don't exercise (Tully, 1995). Providing such facilities at company premises...
also increases social support for employees by bringing them together outside work settings.

There is a direct relationship between the food and physical and emotional state. Convenience often forces employees to sacrifice good eating habits. This is particularly true for employees who work in shifts and have difficulty in establishing routine eating hours and places. Out of convenience it is easy to fall into a pattern of eating foods that are easiest and quickest to obtain. This combination rarely results in a well-balanced and nutritional diet. Organisations often provide lunch or even breakfast and dinner to shift employees. It should be ensured that well-balanced and healthy food is served. Besides employees should be informed about the importance and benefits of healthy diet. Also, spouses can be involved through Spouse Involvement Programmes so that employees get healthy diet at home. A logical extension of this is helping employees to get rid of smoking and drinking. Although such schemes cost initially but in the long run help organisation save money by reducing illness related costs such as reduced absenteeism, lower medical bills etc.

L. L. Beans pays upto $ 200 to employees whose families quit smoking or take prenatal classes. The company’s annual insurance premiums at $ 2000 per worker are half of the American national average (Tully, 1995).

7.3.2.1d Evaluation and Improvement / Change in Interventions

Before implementing any stress management intervention it is extremely important that the specific stressors as well as demographic and personal characteristics of the
participants in SMI are known. This is important for SMI to succeed because there is no one-intervention strategy that can work across organisations, situations and times. Implementing SMI is a dynamic process. Often within the same organisation, an intervention is effective with a group of participants but ineffective for another group. Similarly, an intervention may work in one environment but not in the other. Also, an intervention that is effective at a point in time may not work at other time in same organisation and environment. Therefore, besides the need for management to be innovative and imaginative, there is a need for constant monitoring and review of interventions and results so that they can change with time and perform the basic function of keeping organisational stress under manageable limits.
Figure 7.2 Management of Stress

Organisational Role Stress (ORS)
1. Inter Role Distance
2. Role Stagnation
3. Role Expectation Conflict
4. Role Erosion
5. Role Overload
6. Role Isolation
7. Personal Inadequacy
8. Self Role Distance
9. Role Ambiguity
10. Resource Inadequacy

Coping (At Individual Level)

Functional strategies (Problem focused)

Dysfunctional Strategies (Emotion focused)

Stress Management Intervention (At organisational level)

Primary Interventions (Preventive)

Job redesign, Role restructuring, Organisational restructuring

Secondary Interventions (Preventive / Reactive)

Stress management training, Communication and information sharing, wellness programs

Tertiary Interventions (Treatment)

Employee assistance programs, counseling

IRD - Role negotiation
RS - Role transition
REC - Role making
RE - Role development / Enrichment
RO - Role Slimming
RI - Role Linkage
PI - Role Linkage
SRD - Role Integration
RA - Role clarification
RIn - Role generation

IRD - Role partition / Elimination,
RS - Role fixation
REC - Role taking
RE - Role visibility
RO - Role reduction
RI - Role boundedness
PI - Role shrinkage
SRD - Role rejection, self rejection
RA - Role prescription
RIn - Role atrophy