CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION
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Interest in Stress and its effects on human beings has received considerable attention during the past three decades. Hans Selye was the pioneer in the twentieth century who gave impetus to the interest of psychologists to pay attention to the role of stress on physical wellbeing. His researches are based on the works of Claude Bernard (1859) and Walter Cannon (1929). Bernard demonstrated the value of stability of internal environment and insisted on its maintenance at all cost. Walter Cannon said that fight and flight is an essential mechanism for survival. Thus scientific study of stress has become an integral part of Psychobiological Sciences.

The most important fact concerning the term stress is its persistence, wide spread usage in Biology and Psychology. In today's life, Stress has become so significant in every body's life and it has become pervasive and major concern for Scientists in various fields for e.g., Medicine, Psychology, Sociology, Neurobiology, Environmental sciences etc. Thus research in the above said fields is directly or indirectly concerned with the question of understanding the antecedent and consequences of stress and its management in such a way that quality of life of people is improved. A problem of such magnitude requires to have proper understanding of the concept stress and its related phenomena. So that we may handle our own life as well as those of others.
Stress is an interesting word. Most of the people have no difficulty saying when they are under stress, and attributing all problems to stress. The meaning of stress goes back to at least the early fourteenth century, at which time, the word had already acquired several rather different meanings. It is a concept which is understood by all so long as it is used in a sufficiently vague and general context (Cox 1978). Selye (1936) defined stress "as a non-specific response of the body to any demand, positive or negative, that is made of it". Bonner (1967) said that stress is frustration and threat which cannot be reduced. Paykel and associates (1971) say that stress is whatever upsets people. Thus we see that this concept has acquired several different meanings. Stress seems to apply equally to a form of stimulus (or stressor), a force requiring change of adoption (strain), a mental state (distress), and a form of body reaction or response (that is Selye's general adaptation syndrome of stress). Thus Stress combines, the external stimulus, the life event and the cost of individual responses to the stimulus, such as anxiety or depression. There is an argument among researchers whether the stimulus must be aversive or not to be stressful or whether any life change is in itself stressful. But we recognize that stress is a part of life and learning how to cope successfully with stress is an important aspect of human development.
The early researchers on stress address themselves mostly to the understanding of the meaning of stress and delineating the effects of stress. Stress has been found to act as a tonic when it is in milder form. When Stress intensity increases it leads to deleterious effects both of the body and mind.

When we observe the development and the meaning of the term stress. Stress is defined in four variations.

1. Firstly, Stress is considered as a stimulus which produces turbulence of some sort of relative change (Holmes and Rahe 1967).

2. Secondly, Stress is looked upon as a response the nature of turbulence or the change itself (Appley and Trumbull, 1967).

3. The third view is to treat stress as an interaction between an external force and the resistance opposed to it, as in Biology (Coyne and Lazarus, 1980), and

4. The fourth approach holds it as a more or less comprehensive combination of the above factors.

From the above four observations we find that stress researchers initially experience a lack of specificity in defining stress. This is because there has been numerous researchers in the field of Stress (Hanneman
and Mc Ewen. 1975). In Physics stress has a meaning of force, which act on a body, produces strain or deformation. In physiology, the various changes in the physiological functioning in response to evocative agents denote stress. In Psychology, stress refers to a state of the organism resulting from some interaction with the environment. In Psychophysiology, stress is that stimulus which imposes detectable strain that cannot be easily accommodated by the body and so presents an impaired health or behaviour. Pearlin and his associates (1982) stated that it is not the core meaning of the concept that is confusing, for there is a general agreement that stress refers to a response of the organism to noxious or threatening condition. The doubt and disagreement arise with regard to where and how to identify this response.

The foregoing discussion help us to gain a better understanding of the phenomena of stress. Stress is an individual experience. Much depends upon how the individual perceives and experiences it. Individuals vary on how they perceive situations either as a challenge or as a threat which intern mobilises the psychophysical system to meet the situation and as a result individuals are subjected to stress. These differentiality in responding to stress brings the concept of coping into
the foreground. Which means the response to all manner stressful events, happenings, during uncircumstances. Although coping behaviour is a relative late comer to the domain of stress research it has attracted a lot of attention.

Coping process involves what the person does about the stress situation. Coping mechanisms include individual's attempts directly to alter the threatening conditions themselves, and the attempts to change their appraisal so that they need not feel threatened. Coping also have a dual function of problem solving and regulation of emotional distress. Thus Lazarus and Launiver (1978) suggest that "the ways people cope with stress is important to overall morale, social functioning and health/illness. Various attempts have been made to classify the different types of coping mechanisms (which are seen as healthy, reality oriented, and conscious), defence mechanisms which are regarded as rigid (distorting and involving unconscious elements) and fragmentary process (which are repetitive, unresponsive to requirements, and determined by affect needs), (Haan 1963, 1977). Lazarus and his colleagues (Lazarus and Launier, 1978; Roskies and Lazarus, 1980) have proposed a classification based first on whether the function is to alter the troubled person environment transaction, or to regulate emotion (i.e., problem-solving
or palliation); and based second on the coping mode used. The coping modes are subdivided into information-seeking, direct action (either on the self or the environment), inhibition of action, and various intrapsychic modes. These categories are of course, rather broad, and it remains quite uncertain whether they reflect dimensions which relate in any way to outcome. It should be added that coping can be anticipatory (i.e., initiated before an expected stressful encounter) or consequent upon the event (Lazarus, 1975). Thus in anticipation, people may take on only those tasks they feel they can handle, they may insulate themselves against failure, or they may plan ahead and rehearse various solutions (Mechanic, 1978).

Here too there is discomfort with the imprecision of definition and lack of systematic categorization of coping methods accompanied by a trend toward over inclusiveness in which all responses to a stressful event are defined as coping responses. Although coping behaviour is relatively late comer to the doing of stress research. There has been rapid escalation in recent years of related studies including:


2. Factors that reflect risk and vulnerability to various types of behaviour disorders. (Anthony & Koupernick, 1974; Gleser, Green & Winget, 1981; Regier & Allen, 1981; Watt, Anthony, Wynne, & Rolf, in press; Wynne, Cromwell, & Matthysse, 1978); and

3. Protective factors that may account for resilience and adoption in the presence of severally threatening events. (Baruch & Barnett, 1980; Hartup, 1979; Rathjuen & Foreyt, 1879; Suimi, 1979; Werner & Smith, 1982).

The importance of individual and environmental factors that can influence vulnerability in relation to stress has now gained general acceptance, despite the fact that the specific influences that account for differential responsiveness to stress too often remain speculative. But the personal qualities and characteristics that an individual brings to stress and coping interaction are likely to be important the relevant variables of this type include age, sex, genetic factors temperament, intelligence and problem solving skills (Appley and Trumbull 1967).
Children are also not strangers to stress. Over a significant span of human history they have been more often the victims of slings and arrows of an uncaring society than recipients of its benificial protection. In a recent volume Maccoby (1980) said children's social development, begins her account, with "the child has victim" and gives a graphic portrayal of stressors in childhood in England and American Colony's during the Sixteenth and mid Eighteenth centuries. Children through out history have been subjected to a variety of distressing experiences ranging broadly over malnutrition, physical and sexual abuse, neglect, psychological depravities, lack of support, separation from and loss of caregivers, forced labour in forbidding factors and mines, and the pervasive handicap through the centuries of powerless role and status assignments.

Due to globalizations, children of present day are facing certain problems in their physical, social, psychological, home and educational front. These problems have potential to create stress which may result in improper children physical and psychological growth is and are important for understanding the development and prevention of psychopathology. (Watamura, Donzella, Alwin, Gunnar 2003). (Miller, Brotman and his associates 2003).
With regard to behaviour of children under stress there is a lack of systematic literature and very few studies which are present were seen in Western population. India is under the influence of globalization and the changes due to this effect are bound to have their impact on the children. So empirical studies on the sources of stress and how children cope up with stress is very much need of the hour. The role of school, the personality characteristics of the child and the coping strategies used by the children are to be studied.

It is in the context of foregoing that the specific study of the sources of stress, coping styles in relation to their personality and intelligence was planned. The study aims in delineating sources of stress and methods of coping by children. Also examining the personality characteristics and general ability of the child on stress and coping behaviour.