CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

All individuals during the course of the lives are faced with uncontrollable outcomes, undesirable life events, and uncertainties (Druckman and Swets, 1988; Silver and Wortman, 1980, Workman and Brehm, 1975). These involve questions like how to create or discover life's meaning, understanding issues of good and evil (Krushner, 1981, 1989, H. Smith, 1965, 1976) developing a stable and positive identity failing which feelings of stress, fear and frustration begins.

It is here that the urge of recognizing oneself begins and to understand oneself education is essential. Together with the above causes, the challenges of establishing one's identity among family members, friends and social circle one needs to look for avenues in education - that is professional courses or non-professional courses. The rush towards professional courses exceeds far beyond that of non-professional courses, the reasons being mainly better prospects in life, stability and social status.

Along with selection of professional courses there goes without saying that the struggle to attain success is inevitable, and a lot of hard work and labour, physical and mental, go in making an individual a successful career person. Comparatively, a purely non-professional course has lesser degree of mental and physical exertion and the course
gives an individual enough time to pursue his other hobbies thereby relieving and breaking stress.

Thus stress is mostly experienced by individuals seeking professional courses whereas less stress is experienced by individuals seeking non-professional courses although there is always some stress experienced by all college students.

**Stress in Non-Professional Graduate Students**

Students react to college in a variety of ways. For some students college is stressful because it is an abrupt change from high school. For others separation from home is a source of stress. Although, some stress is necessary for personal growth, the amount of stress can overwhelm a student and affect his ability to cope. One type of excessive stress in college students is the fear of academic work or inability to complete academic work.

Another measure of stress in college students is the dropout rate. Although nationwide figures are difficult to obtain an estimated 50 per cent of students entering college do not finish college studies. (Hirsch and Keinston, 1970). Students feel a mismatch between themselves and their college, and they wish to distance themselves from the source of stress which is the college environment. (Folk, 1975; Hirsch and Keniston, 1970; Katz, *et al.*, 1969). Hence the college dropouts.
Coping Strategies

Solutions suggested for reducing stress among college students include "stress inoculation" like informing students in advance what difficulties they might face, and encouraging them to develop their own strategies to achieve personal goals. Other remedies include improving campus mental health services, organizing peer counselling, and self-help groups.

Stress in Professional Medical and Dental Students

Medical education involves four years of medical school and three to five years of residency training in a teaching hospital. Premedical education in college is in itself stressful because of the keen competition to get into the medical school. Competition continues in the medical school among students eager to get into the residency program of their choice.

Dental education involves four years of dental school and one year internship. For entering into the course a student has to go through an all India or state entrance examination which is highly competitive. Stress accumulates in these students at every stage of professional studies.

A major stressor for medical and dental students is the amount and the complexity of the material to be learned. Students feel academic pressure because all their classmates are superior college
students. Fatigue is often considered as a stressor. Some students even imagine they have the disease they are studying about.

In the third year, medical and dental students begin patient care. Terminal cases are seen by the students, thus causing stress. In the first year of residency training (internship), overwork and sleep deprivation become major stressors. Lack of personal time continues to stress residents.

Stress is necessary to challenge students to learn. Approaches are needed that reduce the negative aspects of stress (distress) which lessens students' learning and performance. The key to reduce distress is providing students with a feeling of control over their education, information about what to expect, and feedback regarding what can be done to improve their performance. Students who do not feel helpless will adopt their own coping strategies.

Coping strategies can be those accessible professionally, peer-counselling, a student support group, and family support.

Stress

Following are the definitions of stress put forth by various researchers.

The study of reaction to conditions of intense psychological stresses has been a major concern of psychological investigation for a long time. The concept of "stress" is one of the most significant
concepts ever developed in the sciences. Stress is a word derived from a Latin word “stringere” meaning “to draw tight”.

Different investigators have employed different meanings for the term “stress”. An eminent Canadian Scientist Hans Selye (1950,1976) defined “stress” as the “non specific response of the body to any demand”. Hans Selye (1920) in his study with body response to illness was struck as to how patients suffering from the most diverse diseases exhibited strikingly similar signs and symptoms, such as loss of weight and appetite, diminished muscular strength and absence of ambition. Selye (1920) called this generalized response “the syndrome of just being sick”, “sick syndrome” led him to a detailed study of the stress response in laboratory rats. Selye (1982) discovered that stressors like noxious agents, hormone and tissue extract, electric shock, heat and cold when introduced into the body of rats, always seemed to have the same response. Three types of changes were produced:

1) The cortex or outer layer of the adrenal glands became enlarged and hyperactive.

2) The thymus, spleen and lymph nodes and all other lymphatic structures shrank.

3) Deep bleeding ulcers appeared in the stomach and upper intensities. Being closely interdependent these changes formed a definite syndrome of stress.
From physiological point of view Selye and his colleagues have conducted extensive investigations over the past forty years on widespread non specific bodily changes which occur as reaction to stressful situations. One of the most common definitions of stress is anything which causes an alteration of the psychological homeostatic process (Selye, 1976).


Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define “stress as a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her wellbeing”. Here attention is directed to the interplay between the individual and the environment rather than to the person as an isolated entity. It becomes clear that Lazarus and Folkman (1984) believe that stress can best be understood from a “transactional process appraisal and coping centered approach”.

In a laudable effort, Ramachandra Rao (1983) has recently highlighted the ancient Indian contribution as an alternative way of thinking about stress so that a comprehensive model of stress culturally specific to India can be developed. Confining himself to the systems of Samkhya, Yoga and Ayurveda, Ramachandra Rao (1983) highlights two
Indian concepts namely “klesa” and “dukha”. The concept of “klesa” refers to the stressor aspect and the concept of “dukha” refers to the phenomenon of stress itself. The Samkhya system views dukha to signify the stress that the individual experiences in the course of his interaction with the world around him. It describes an organismic state involving the experience of emotions and is characterized by an urge to escape or avoid. Ramachandra Rao (1983) concludes that the broad-based model of stress provided by the Yoga Sutra relies on the cognitive appraisal of the self, the object and the threat. He has also discussed stress with reference to situations in the Gita and Ayurveda, claiming that the Gita provides an excellent illustration of stress and how it is to be handled. Ramachandra Rao (1983) has also outlined an elaborate ideology of stress based on Ayurveda, the Indian system of medicine, which relies on the Samkhya school for its general theoretical orientation. It has been demonstrated that such a model of stress concerns itself more with the cognitive processes than the western models of stress do. Thus he brings to light the ancient Indian contribution to the understanding of the stress phenomena on the basis of which a comprehensive model of stress, culturally specific to India can be developed.

According to Katz . A. Clifford (1990) what one person considers stressful is often experienced very differently by another. In fact sometimes what is very stressful for us at one time in our lives may be minimal or not at all at another time. The answer lies in the phrase
“perception of the threat” because of differences in experience, perspective, belief, values or what psychologists called “world view”.

Stress in our lives is a unique expression of who we are at a given point of time. Herein lies the problem in understanding our own stress and that of others and specially in dealing constructively with it. There is no unitary source or cause of stress, nor is there a unitary cure or answer.

Mc Grath (1970) has emphasized that the starting point for any discussion of stress is the nature of the relation between the individual and his external environment. He suggests that stress occurs when there is an imbalance between the environmental demand and the response capability of the individual.

Having considered a few quotes from investigators viewpoint on stress let us now see the effects of stress on personality self-esteem and academic achievements.

**Personality**

According to Walter Mischel (1976), “personality consists of the distinctive patterns of behaviours including thoughts and emotions that characterize each individual’s adaptation to the situation of his or her life”.
According to Gorden Allport (1937), “personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his or her unique adjustments to the environment”.

Personality has been studied in different ways. Some psychologists have developed broad theories based on origins and development of personality while others have focused on the influence of heredity on personality. Most of these theories can be grouped into four categories:

1) Type and trait approaches.
2) Dynamic approaches.
3) Learning and behaviour approaches.
4) Humanistic approaches.

Type and trait theories of personality focus on an individual’s personal characteristics. One of the first type of theories was proposed in 400 BC by Hypocrites, a Greek physician. He grouped people into temperament types which are as follows:

1) Sanguine (cheerful, vigorous, confident, optimistic).
2) Melancholic (depressed, morose).
3) Choleric (hot-tempered).
4) Phlegmatic (slow moving, calm, unexcitable).

In a similar manner Eysenck (1967) identified individuals in two distinctive types: (1) Introverts, and (2) Extroverts.
Introverts have characteristics of social withdrawal, shyness and a tendency not to talk much. Extroverts have characteristics of sociability, liveliness and excitability.

Rosenberg and Friedman (1974) have classified individuals into Type A and Type B personalities. Type A personalities are ultra competitive in nature. They live under constant pressure. They seek recognition and advancement and take on multiple activities with deadlines to meet. Most of the time they function as alert, competent and efficient people who get things done. When put under stressful conditions they become hostile, impatient, anxious and disorganized. Type B individuals are quite the opposite. They are easy going and non-competitive in nature. They weather out stress easily.

Dynamic Personality Theory involves a search for the processes by which needs, motives and impulses which are often hidden from view interact to produce the individual's behaviour. Freud's psychoanalysis (1920, 1938, 1940 and 1949) became both a theory of personality and a method of psychotherapy. Freud's psychoanalytic theory has three major parts:

1) a theory of the structure of personality in which the id, the ego and the superego are the principle parts.

2) a theory of personality dynamics in which the conscious and the unconscious motivation and ego defense mechanisms play a major role
Learning and Behaviour Theories are built on learning and behaviour principles and they share some common assumptions and practices. One such assumption is that many of the behaviours that make up personality are conditioned or learned. Many behaviours originate as early as in childhood. Another assumption is that the existing conditions in the environment help to maintain these behaviours. Thus learning theorists study behaviour by studying the individuals' learning history, their current environment etc. Learning and behaviour theorists also believe in testing their theories. Striving for clarity leads them to focus on observable events and behaviours.

Humanistic approaches focus on individual's internal perceptions or introspections. A number of theorists have focused their work on "self". Self has two distinct sets of meanings. One set has to do with people's attitudes about themselves, the second set manages, copes, thinks, remembers, perceives and plans. Two of the most influential humanistic theorists are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

Many theorists have considered characteristics of people who cope effectively with a range of difficult situations in an effort to identify personality traits linked with successful coping. One such trait is a "sense of coherence" proposed by Antonovsky (1987). It is a way of seeing the world as being predictive and comprehensive. People who are high in comprehensiveness believe that their life and life experiences are ordered and structured and predictable as opposed to being random and confusing. People high in manageability believe that
they have resources at their disposal to deal with stressful events. Similarly people high in the ability of meaningfulness believe that life and its experiences make sense to them. Thus these are the various traits that persons high in successful coping possess.

According to Naidu (1983) the profile of high stress tolerators indicates that they generally think positively about themselves and others, believe in the existence of God and take life to be meaningful. They also engage more in task relevant rather than in defensive behaviours. Srivastava (1981) concluded that those who cope more effectively with stress are people with more positive orientation to life in general they utilize a mixture of both coping and defense responses.

**Self-esteem**

Self-esteem is a "global evaluation of the self" (Baumerster and Tice, 1985). Korman, (1976) suggested that people develop attitudes and behave in a way that maintains their level of self-esteem.

According to Rosenberg (1979) self-esteem reflects the preserved discrepancy between an individual's actual self state and an ideal or desired self state. "It is not simply how good a person thinks he is with regard to quality, but how good he wants to be that counts". He also suggested that self-evaluation occurs within an individual's unique framework of evaluative guides or standards.
Similarly Cooper Smith (1967) suggested that self-esteem reflects the evaluation of several aspects of the self, each measured against the background of an individual's personal aspiration.

Types of Self-esteem Individuals

Lake, Shaw, Saari and Latham 1988 suggests that:

a) Individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to accept challenging goals, perform better in complex tasks and have better job satisfaction.

b) Individuals with low self-esteem seem more likely to reflect on their own thoughts and feelings. They are found to obtain higher self-consciousness scores on self-consciousness scale (SCS, Feningstein, Scheier and Russ, 1975; Turner, Scheier and Carver 1978).

c) Brockner, (1988) stated that high self-esteem individuals differ from their low self-esteemed counterparts in the way they think, feel, and perhaps most importantly behave. Brockner and Trice stated that high self-esteemed primary control systems are designed to cultivate talent and maximize success in order to excel whereas those with low self-esteem primary control systems are designed to remedy personal deficiencies in order to reach minimally successful or satisfactory level of performance.
Self-esteem and Stress

Each individual has his own determined range for coping with stress. Improving one's own sense of self esteem is an effective self reduction insight. As long as one's stress gauge shows that one is within one's elastic limits, one will not be subject to distress but once the stress gauge crosses the threshold point, one begins to experience the effects of distress.

Self-esteem is probably the most important area because it is always with us and we probably have the potential for controlling it more than any other area of our life.

We possess adaptive energy or capability and thus we can adapt satisfactorily to various demands of life. If we exercise control over self-esteem, then we will be able to increase the adaptive energy and thus cope well with all the demands of life.

William Glasser identifies two basic psychological needs which are closely related to how one feels about oneself: 1) need to love and be loved and 2) need to feel worthwhile to oneself and to others. When these two psychological needs are met, one is not likely to suffer unduly from an inadequate or low self-esteem.

Self-esteem appears to serve as an anxiety buffer in one's daily life with research findings indicating that those with high self-esteem cope significantly better with stressful conditions than those with low

Self-esteem and Gender

Generally, gender differences are not apparent in the global or total score which measure a number of domains of self-esteem or self concept. (Mobya, 1994; Osborne and Le Gette, 1982; Piers, 1984; Marsh, 1985) reported that only 0.66 per cent of gender difference was noted over 3,500 Australian student’s study of self-esteem.

Gender difference was noted when subjects were asked to indicate positive or negative attributes. Males were more likely to indicate positive attributes.

Hattie and McInman’s quantitative review of literature also supported the need to use a multidimensional model rather than a global model of self. (Shavelson, Hubner and Staton 1976) Marsh identified the specific dimensions in which boys tended to indicate higher self-esteem as achievements, leadership, physical abilities and appearances. Girls tended to regard themselves better in the area of verbal skills, schools and moral facets of the self.

Academic Achievement

Although education may superficially appear to be a purely cognitive domain, academic achievement is a function of a tangled skein of variables many of a non cognitive character.
A flood of studies in the West conveys the message that differences in self-esteem are associated with differences in academic achievement. For example in surveying American research, Perkey, (1970) concluded that, “overall, the research evidence clearly shows a persistent and significant relationship between self concept and academic achievement”. Later studies such as by Sinha and Sharma (1975), Simon and Simon (1975), and Franklin (1979), have also supported this generalization. Further, there appears to be a sex difference in the self concept achievement relationship: Perkey (1970); Prendergaast and Binder (1975); Notar (1975) Moreover the studies by Mintz (1975); Henein (1978); and Gose, Sharon and Minller (1980); all using the verbal measures of self concept and academic achievement is moderated by the intelligence level of students.

Stress and Academic Achievement

In recent reviews Sharma (1978) concluded that 1) high anxiety is connected with relatively low performance at both school and college level, 2) test anxiety is a better predictor of academic success than general anxiety, 3) there is an evidence of anxiety intelligence interaction.

Test anxiety consists of two major components i.e., Worry (W) and Emotionality (E). Various studies by Morris, Cynthia and Fisher (1976), Hagtuet (1976), reported that only “W” component of test anxiety was negatively related to academic performance. Further, Wine
(1971) saw high anxiety and low self-esteem as correlated but as different variables leading to narrowing of attentional field. Thus the link between test anxiety and academic performance seems to be mediated by the level of self-esteem. However very few studies have considered self-esteem, test anxiety and intelligence together as correlates or predictors of academic achievement.

Need for Coping

The overall need of the study is to counsel students of professional and non-professional courses about methods of coping with stress, thus assisting them in the development of meaningful educational plans that are compatible with their life goals.

Academic advising is necessary and should be viewed as a continuous process of classification and evaluation. The academic advisor helps to identify options for the student each with its benefits and consequences.

Research indicates that one of the most powerful influences on student persistence in college is individual attention from faculty members. The research shows that students frequently judge the worth of their academic experience from their interactions with faculty members. Academic advising can positively influence the education and personal development of students. It is important to remember however that the ultimate responsibility for making informal decisions about life goals and educational plans must rest with the student.
Need for the Study

The researcher has traced the evolution of concepts, principles and observations on stress that professionals and non-professionals are subjected to with special emphasis on their personality, self-esteem and academic achievements through the pages of literature as relevant to our study.

Several studies have been reported in the area of stress. Noted investigator like Hans Selye (1920) has described stress from physiological point of view while Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have defined stress in terms of the relationship between the person and the environment. Others consider stress with different view points.

It is evident from the findings of earlier researchers that stress has affected the growth of personality, academic achievement, self esteem of the people who are involved in academics. But no attempt has been made to study specifically the impact of stress on the students of different types of courses. It is believed that the students of professional courses undergo tremendous stress as the courses themselves are very tough and also a kind of competition prevails there. On the contrary the non-professional students may not experience the similar amount of stress. Hence, the present researcher feels the need of a study to investigate the differential impact of stress on these groups of students.
Further it is also needed to study the impact of stress on personality, academic achievement, self-esteem of the students of different courses. These psychological variables are considered to be the most essential aspects of growing individuals. It is also true that stress in one's life is inevitable, but one will have to learn the art of coping with the same. Therefore, if the coping is to be suggested to the student groups, it becomes essential to study the groups who are in need of the same. The present study is one such attempt.