CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Stress management warrants much attention nowadays, particularly in the corporate sector, more so in the IT sector. While a minimum level of stress is harmless, even necessary to bring out the best in human beings at work, too much of stress will wear the employee out, upset his work life balance and simply damage him totally.

Occupational Stress is stress involving work. Stress is defined in terms of its physical and physiological effects on a person, and can be a mental, physical or emotional strain. It can also be a tension or a situation or factor that can cause stress. Occupational stress occurs when there is a discrepancy between the demands of the environment/workplace and an individual’s ability to carry out and complete these demands. Often a stressor can lead the body to have a physiological reaction which can strain a person physically as well as mentally. One of the main causes of occupational stress is work overload.

Stress is a prevalent and costly problem in today's workplace. About one-third of workers report high levels of stress. One-quarter of employees view their jobs as the number one stressor in their lives. Three-quarters of employees believe the worker has more on-the-job stress than a generation ago. Evidence also suggests that
stress is the major cause of turnover in organizations.\textsuperscript{2} With continued stress at the workplace, workers will develop psychological and physiological dysfunctions and decreased motivation in excelling in their position. Problems at work are more strongly associated with health complaints than are any other life stressor-more so than even financial problems or family problems.\textsuperscript{5} Many studies suggest that psychologically demanding jobs that allow employees little control over the work process increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.\textsuperscript{6} On the basis of research by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and many other organizations, it is widely believed that job stress increases the risk for development of back and upper-extremity musculoskeletal disorders.\textsuperscript{6} High levels of stress are associated with substantial increases in health service utilization.\textsuperscript{2} Some scholars note that an increase in workload, a hostile work environment, downsizing, and shift work can result in occupational stress. Often workloads remain immense even though employees do their best to complete them, and the employees may feel stressed as a result. A high demand and time pressures contribute to the stress. Downsizing may also be due to the privatization of a company. When downsizing occurs, employees are either laid off or fired. Those who still have their jobs often have to worry about whether they will be next on the list of employees to be laid off. If
employers are not supportive, discriminating in favor of some employees at the expense of others, do not offer encouragement, or create a hostile work environment, this can cause stress for employees.

Interpersonal conflicts within the workplace, uncertainty about job security, and underutilized job abilities are also causes of occupational stress.

Physical symptoms that may occur because of occupational stress include fatigue, headache, stomach problems, muscular aches and pains, chronic mild illness, sleep disturbances, and eating disorders. Psychological and behavioral problems that may develop include anxiety, irritability, alcohol and drug use, feeling powerless and low morale. If exposure to stressors in the workplace is prolonged, then chronic health problems can occur including stroke. Studies among the Japanese population specifically showed a more than 2-fold increase in the risk of total stroke among men with job strain (combination of high job demand and low job control). Along with the risk of stroke comes high blood pressure and immune system dysfunction. Prolonged occupational stress can lead to occupational burnout.
Transactional model

Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman suggested in 1984 that stress can be thought of as resulting from an “imbalance between demands and resources” or as occurring when “pressure exceeds one's perceived ability to cope”. Stress management was developed and premised on the idea that stress is not a direct response to a stressor but rather one's resources and ability to cope mediate the stress response and are amenable to change, thus allowing stress to be controllable.\textsuperscript{7}

In order to develop an effective stress management programme it is first necessary to identify the factors that are central to a person controlling his/her stress, and to identify the intervention methods which effectively target these factors. Lazarus and Folkman's interpretation of stress focuses on the transaction between people and their external environment (known as the Transactional Model). The model contends that stress may not be a stressor if the person does not perceive the stressor as a threat but rather as positive or even challenging. Also, if the person possesses or can use adequate coping skills, then stress may not actually be a result or develop because of the stressor. The model proposes that people can be taught to manage their stress and cope with their stressors. They may learn to change their perspective of the stressor and provide
them with the ability and confidence to improve their lives and handle all of types of stressors.

**Health realization/innate health model**

The health realization/innate health model of stress is also founded on the idea that stress does not necessarily follow the presence of a potential stressor. Instead of focusing on the individual's appraisal of so-called stressors in relation to his or her own coping skills (as the transactional model does), the health realization model focuses on the nature of thought, stating that it is ultimately a person's thought processes that determine the response to potentially stressful external circumstances. In this model, stress results from appraising oneself and one's circumstances through a mental filter of insecurity and negativity, whereas a feeling of well-being results from approaching the world with a "quiet mind".9,10

This model proposes that helping stressed individuals understand the nature of thought—especially providing them with the ability to recognize when they are in the grip of insecure thinking, disengage from it, and access natural positive feelings—will reduce their stress. Walter Cannon and Hans Selye used animal studies to establish the earliest scientific basis for the study of stress. They measured the physiological responses of animals to external pressures, such as heat and cold, prolonged restraint, and surgical
procedures, then extrapolated from these studies to human beings.\textsuperscript{11,12}

Subsequent studies of stress in humans by Richard Rahe and others established the view that stress is caused by distinct, measureable life stressors, and further, that these life stressors can be ranked by the median degree of stress they produce (leading to the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale). Thus, stress was traditionally conceptualized to be a result of external insults beyond the control of those experiencing the stress. More recently, however, it has been argued that external circumstances do not have any intrinsic capacity to produce stress, but instead their effect is mediated by the individual's perceptions, capacities, and understanding.

In this difficult economy, many employees are finding it harder than ever to cope with stress in the workplace. Regardless of occupation, seniority, or salary level, workers are spending more and more of their work days feeling frazzled and out of control, instead of alert and relaxed. While some stress is a normal part of the workplace, excessive stress can interfere with one’s productivity and reduce his physical and emotional health.

We generally use the word "stress" when we feel that everything seems to have become too much - we are overloaded and wonder whether we really can cope with the pressures placed upon us.
Anything that poses a challenge or a threat to our well-being is a stress. Some stresses get us going and they are good for us - without any stress at all many say our lives would be boring and would probably feel pointless. However, when the stresses undermine both our mental and physical health they are bad.

**Fight or flight response**

The way we respond to a challenge may also be a type of stress. Part of our response to a challenge is physiological and affects our physical state. When faced with a challenge or a threat, our body activates resources to protect us - to either get away as fast as we can, or fight.

Our fight-or-flight response is our body's sympathetic nervous system reacting to a stressful event. Our body produces larger quantities of the chemicals cortisol, adrenaline and noradrenaline, which trigger a higher heart rate, heightened muscle preparedness, sweating, and alertness - all these factors help us protect ourselves in a dangerous or challenging situation.

Stress can be both positive and negative, which has an impact on the employee's performance at work. If taken positively, the results are positive, and if taken in a negative way, may yield disastrous results. For most of the people, low to moderate amount of stress enable
them to perform their jobs better. However, a high level of stress or for that matter even a low level stress spread over a long period, eventually takes its toll, and the performance declines.

Stress management involves controlling and reducing the tension that occurs in stressful situations by making emotional and physical changes. The degree of stress and the desire to make the changes will determine how much change takes place.

Of all the stressors working in an individual’s life, job stress is one of the leading causes of stress.

Workplace has become a source of extreme stress as a result of technological changes, mass retrenchments, mergers and acquisitions, information overload, demand for more productivity, fierce competition, and uncertain future.

When our parents joined their jobs, they did so with great certainty: that they will one day retire doing the same kind of work, and probably from the same place. Today’s generation is not that lucky. Even if we have been trained for long number of years to be experts in an area, we cannot be certain that we will be doing the same kind of work a few years down the road.

Workplace stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do
not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Stress at the workplace can lead to poor health and even injury.

Workplace stress has become one of the major causes of concern.

Stress in the workplace is not good for the organization as it leads to decrease in quality and productivity. It is also not good for the individual either as it is leads to job dissatisfaction and low morale.

**Symptoms of Job Stress:**

Early Warning Signs that coping with workplace stress is becoming difficult for an employee are

- headache,
- upset stomach,
- sleep problems,
- Irritability and short temper,
- Difficulty in concentrating,
- Job dissatisfaction,
- Low morale, etc.

Since stress at the workplace arises due to continuing workplace conditions, the above health conditions may continue for long periods, and may lead to serious health problems.
Some corporate bosses are of the opinion that some amount of pressure and job stress on employees is good for increasing productivity. But, organizations with recent studies have shown that organizations actively taking care of employees’ health concerns in the form of internal policies are able to increase their bottom lines.

Organizations are waking up to the truth that high levels of job stress in the organization do not make for good business practice. Increased job stress leads to increased absenteeism, tardiness and intentions to leave the job, all of which lead to decreased productivity.

Workplace stress can be dealt with at two levels –

Coping with job stress through Stress Management:

Some organizations provide training to employees on stress management and Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Nearly half of the companies in USA are providing training to employees on ways to handle stress. These programs teach employees the causes and consequences of stress, the way to handle them and some relaxation exercises.

These programs are able to alleviate some symptoms of stress, like sleep disturbances and anxiety.
Some companies also provide counseling sessions to some employees who also have some personal problems.

However, these benefits are short lived in nature as they do not strike the problem at the root, if the genesis of the problem lies somewhere in the work practices being followed by the organization.

Another way to handle the problem is to employ a consultant, who studies the organizational work environment and gets first hand feedback from the employees. The consultant is then able to suggest the steps to be taken to reduce the levels of stress at workplace.

This approach strikes at the root cause of the problem. The consultant, through his first hand experience of the situation, is able to pin point the exact causes of stress at the workplace – like too much workload, contradictory expectations, mismatch in responsibilities and authorities, etc.

Top Ten Causes of Stress for Managers

1. Office politics
2. Constant interruptions
3. A feeling of little to no control
4. Tight deadlines and other time pressures
5. Poor organizational communication
6. Lack of direction from superiors

7. Too many internal meetings

8. Handling/keeping up with emails

9. Job security

10. Change in the workplace

From the above discussions it is quite clear that various factors contribute to stress in the workplace; the present study aims at investigating the various stressors and their effects; mainly the stress management techniques employed to manage stress effectively.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Whatever be the nature of the job, stress is inevitable in today’s fast paced world; some level of stress is acceptable rather necessary to bring out the best in a worker, but when the stress level exceeds the limits then problems set in. While stress is common for all types of jobs, it is important to see that stress levels are extremely high in some categories of jobs.

Business process outsourcing (BPO) is a broad term referring to outsourcing in all fields. A BPO differentiates itself by either putting in new technology or applying existing technology in a new way to improve a process.
Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is the delegation of one or more IT-intensive business processes to an external provider that in turn owns, administers and manages the selected process based on defined and measurable performance criteria. Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is one of the fastest growing segments of the Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) industry.

Few of the motivation factors as to why BPO is gaining ground are:

- Factor Cost Advantage
- Economy of Scale
- Business Risk Mitigation
- Superior Competency
- Utilization Improvement

For many employed in the BPO sector, "the daily experience is of repetitive, intensive and stressful work, based upon Taylorist principles, which frequently results in employee "burnout". An Expert, more vividly, characterizes the work as "repetitive brain strain". These descriptions are hardly surprising, in a way, given that call centers are established by organizations to "create an environment in which work can be standardized to create relatively uniform and repetitious activities so as to achieve economies of scale and consistent quality of customer service". This means, in other words, that workplaces are organized in ways that weaken employee autonomy and enhance the potential for management
control, and "a loss of control is generally understood to be an important indicator of work-related stress.”

There is almost universal consensus that call center work is stressful. Even in studies that report the observation that some staff actually enjoys their work, mention of stress is still the norm, and a significant portion of the call center literature is devoted to detailing the sources of stress in call center work.

The Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) industry throughout the world is marching ahead at rapid paces but at a heavy cost. The BPO industry, we can easily say is a highly stressed out sector. What measures are being taken to handle and manage the job related stress in the BPO sector, that is the question in front of us.

It is common knowledge that the BPO industry is a highly stressed out sector. Employees resort to various stress coping strategies to manage their stress keeping it at optimum level. The researcher carried out the study “STRESS MANAGEMENT – A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO BPO EMPLOYEES IN PUDUCHERRY” to define how the BPO industry should work in terms of managing stress identifying where the industry is lacking for doing the same, in addition what all techniques should be used so that they manage the stress effectively.
1.2 NEED FOR THE STUDY

The present study mainly aims to study the occupational stressors of BPO employees and the techniques they adapt to overcome their stress. The effectiveness of the techniques is also evaluated.

The BPO industry has ushered in an era of economic freedom and the importance of this cannot be ignored or underestimated especially in a country like India where human resource is abundantly available. The world is becoming flatter day by day and advancement in technology has really given a very big boost to some industries especially the BPO industry in a very big way. Thomas Friedman identifies Collapse of the Berlin Wall, Netscape, Workflow software, uploading, outsourcing, offshoring, supply-chaining, insourcing, informing and virtual communication as the ten major flatteners.\(^\text{13}\) It is no exaggeration to say that for the average middle class English speaking Indian the BPO industry has opened up an endless avenue of potential possibilities. Surely the BPO industry along with its related industries like the KPO (Knowledge Processing Industry) is here to stay.

There is no point in rubbishing them for causing too much stress or upsetting the work life balance; rather what needs to be done is an extensive study of the stress causing factors so as to analyse them. Besides the stressors, stress coping strategies also will have to be evaluated; upon evaluation, research should be done to measure the
adequacy of the stress management techniques, lacuna if any and ways to overcome it. A study of this kind will certainly go a long way in helping the HR people to assist their staff in managing stress effectively.

The present study aims to prod in detail the pressure causing factors for BPO personnel employed in Puducherry region and methods resorted to by them to overcome stress.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In order to gain a better understanding of stress management and its role on moderating the effect of occupational stress on job satisfaction, the following objectives are framed for the present study.

1) To study the underlying dimensions of occupational stress and extent of such stress among BPO personnel in Puducherry.

2) To identify the sources of occupational stress

3) To evaluate the stress management (stress coping strategies) among the BPO personnel.

4) To find out the extent of relationship between occupational stress on job satisfaction
5) To identify the ways in which the stress coping pattern (stress management) moderates the relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction.

6) To summarize the findings, give conclusion and offer necessary suggestions

1.4 HYPOTHESES

Based on the objectives of the study, the Hypotheses are framed as given hereunder.

1) There is no significant difference in the occupational stress among BPO personnel groups with different socio-economic (personal) characteristics

(or)

The level of occupational stress among BPO personnel is independent of their socio-economic characteristics

(or)

There is no impact of personal variables on occupational stress of the BPO personnel.

2) Similarly the hypotheses can be framed for job satisfaction and stress coping strategies (Stress management). That is,

3) The job satisfaction among BPO employees does not differ by personal characteristics.
4) The stress coping strategies (stress management) among BPP personnel is independent of their personal characteristics.

5) There is no significant impact of occupational stress on job satisfaction.

6) The stress management of BPO personnel does not play remarkable role in moderating the effect of occupational stress on job satisfaction.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

More and more employees are experiencing stress at work. They may be coping with too much pressure, long hours or rapid change. The nature of employment has now changed and the idea of a job for life has been replaced by an emphasis on performance. Stress is now recognized as a valid health and safety issue at work. Litigation is on the increase and there have been successful claims for compensation for work-related stress. We live in a much faster-paced world than we used to and most people accept and expect stress in their lives as they strive to balance the demands of their work and home lives. Deadlines to meet, changing priorities, longer working hours, e-mails, commuting; most of us are put under pressure to handle situations that are not life-threatening but nevertheless provoke stress signals. These can lead to a range of unpleasant and debilitating feelings and symptoms, such as
headache, backache, stomach upsets, anxiety attacks and lethargy. This in turn leads to lack of productivity, burn-out and long-term illness if not prevented.

More and more employers are turning to Stress Management to tackle these problems. Stress Management can enable people to improve their own response to stress and enable the organization to reduce workplace stressors. Stress Management aims at preventing and reducing stress for both the individual employee and the organization or company.

With the economy becoming more liberal and global, the highly pressurized corporate race is here to stay. The average middle class English speaking Indian, thanks to his brains, hard working nature and the desire to come up in life has made up his mind to increase his standard of living no matter at the cost of what. Our people do realize that workplace stress brings a big bag of problems but the other bag, the one containing money comes along and is too enticing to miss out. When this is the case, it is nothing but common prudence to work out ways to manage stress.

Conducting frequent studies in this regard will surely help to measure the adequateness of the present stress management methods and will help to identify the areas where more needs to be done. It
will also aid the employers as better stress management techniques will help the workers to be more productive and efficient. It is with this view that the present study has been undertaken.

### 1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The proposed study is to identify the major stressors causing damage both mentally and physically to the workers, also draining the resources of the organization. The employees resort to various stress coping strategies to relax and to refresh themselves. Despite the general agreement that stress plays a role in everyday life, there continues to be substantial controversy about how stress can be managed at the worksite. During the last decade, our knowledge of stress management interventions has increased substantially.¹⁴

Determining the extent of stress-related health problems at work is not an easy task. Most countries routinely collect data on ill-health retirements, work days lost due to sickness, injury and disability, etc. However, such data are imprecise and not reliable in terms of describing trends due to changes in, for example, the recording methods used. For this reason, they can only be used as a basis for ‘educated guesses’ in relation to the extent or cost of occupational stress. It is even more difficult to obtain valid, reliable and standardized data.
Although there is obviously a need for more rigorous data collection mechanisms, it is clear that stress-related ill health is a major cause for concern in terms of its impact on both individuals’ lives and the productivity of organizations and countries. The research summarised in this Report shows that, even within a life perspective, work-related stress is a significant problem and represents a major challenge to occupational health in the BPO industries.

The psychological aspects of work have been the subject of research since at least the 1950s. Initially psychologists concentrated primarily on the obstacles to employees’ adaptation and adjustment to the work environment, rather than on the potentially hazardous characteristics the workplace itself may have for workers. However, with the emergence of psycho-social work-environment research and occupational psychology in the 1960s, the focus of interest has moved away from an individual perspective and towards considering the impact of certain aspects of the work environment on health. There is now a large body of evidence that identifies a common set of work characteristics as potentially hazardous. Additionally, large scale socio-economic and technological changes in recent years have affected workplaces considerably. They are often collectively referred to as “the changing world of work”. This
term encompasses a wide range of new patterns of work organisation at a variety of levels, such as:

- a growing number of older workers
- teleworking and increased use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the workplace
- downsizing, outsourcing, subcontracting and globalisation, with the associated change in employment patterns
- demands for workers’ flexibility both in terms of number and function or skills
- an increasing proportion of the population working in the service sector
- self-regulated work and teamwork

The research corpus is still developing in these areas but there is some preliminary evidence that even changes which may be thought to enhance the work environment can produce the opposite effect. For example Windel studied the introduction of self-regulating team work in the office of an electronics manufacturer. Although self-regulated work may be a source of increased self-efficacy and offer enhanced social support, Windel found that after one year work demands had increased and well-being decreased when compared to baseline data. The data suggested that the increase in
social support brought about by self-regulating teams was not sufficient to counteract increased demands caused by the combination of a reduction in the number of staff and increases in managerial duties. Meta-analytical studies have shown either mixed consequences \(^{17, 18}\) or higher rates of absenteeism and staff turnover\(^{19}\) as a result of the implementation of team work or self-regulated work. It is clear that changes which have such a profound impact on the way organisations operate may carry associated potential hazards that need to be monitored for their impact on health and well-being. In summary, it is possible from the available literature to explore the effects of the more tangible hazards of work on the experience of stress and on health, and to identify those psychosocial hazards which pose a threat to employees. Most literature reviews have identified the need for further research and development to translate this information into a form which can be used in the auditing and analysis of workplaces and organisations. Such a model, together with practical implementation strategies, has been provided by Cox et al.\(^{20}\)

Such a kind of a study pinpointing the stress factors that affect the BPO personnel and analyzing the strategies they adopt to cope up with the stress, measuring their effectiveness will go a long way in better Human Resource Management. Inspite of so many researches and major studies being done in this area, yet it is more than obvious
that there is still much scope to go deep into, searching for solutions.

The present study deals with the work related stressors in the BPOs and their management techniques.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Sample Design

The study has used random sampling method, more specifically stratified random sampling. There are two major BPOs operating in Puducherry, viz, Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd. and SPI Tehnologies Pvt. Ltd. Besides, there are a few other upcoming BPOs, but on a much smaller scale. The researcher though initially pondered on conducting the study on one particular company, later increased the net to include all the firms, big and small to come under the scanner. The population size, at the beginning of the study was just a little over thousand. Ten percent of the population was reasonable, finally 120 respondents were personally interviewed and their responses tabulated. To sum up, the sampling technique here can be said to be more of a convenient sampling.

1.7.2 Source of data

Unlimited literature is available on stress, job related stress and its management; so many scholars have contributed their findings. Though published, printed data is available in plenty yet the
researcher thought it prudent to opt for primary data. From a heterogeneous population, respondents were chosen to represent different demographic variables like age, gender, educational qualification, marital status, religion, caste, income level, service in the industry, etc. The socio-economic background of the respondents also was evaluated. A simple but comprehensive questionnaire was prepared based on Likert’s 5 point and 3 point scales. Individually, the respondents were interviewed and their responses collected. It is rather interesting to note that though it is common knowledge that helping employees to manage stress more easily will also benefit the management in a big way, none of the BPO managements in Puducherry were willing to cooperate. In fact, they left no stone unturned to ensure that their staffs did not open their mouths to the researcher. In fact, it was with great difficulty, patience and perseverance that the entire sample could be interviewed. As the entire study is based on primary data, it was time consuming and also laborious.

1.7.3 Data Collection

The data used in this study are the primary data collected from randomly selected sample comprising of BPO personnel in Puducherry using a well-structured questionnaire. Simple random
technique is adopted to select the required sample among the BPO personnel population in the study area. To measure occupational stress and stress management (stress coping strategies), various statements with 5 point and 3 point Likert type scales are included in the questionnaire. There are 60 items (statements) to measure the occupational stress with scale ranging from “Never feel”, “Occasionally feel”, “Sometimes feel”, “Frequently feel” to “Always feel”. To measure the stress coping strategies, 17 items with 3 point scale with “never”, “sometimes” and “always” are included. The job satisfaction is measured with 9 factors using the scale with responses, “Extremely satisfied”, “Satisfied”, “Somewhat Satisfied”, “Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied”, “Somewhat Dissatisfied”, “Dissatisfied”, “Extremely Dissatisfied”.

1.7.4 Data Analysis (Statistical Techniques)

All the data are analyzed with different statistical tools. The descriptive statistical methods are employed to present the profile of the variables in the study. The reliability / item analysis is carried out on scale items measuring occupational stress, stress management (stress coping strategies) and sources of job satisfaction in order to ascertain the internal consistency of the measuring instruments with the help of Cronbach’a alpha correlation coefficient. Factor analysis is employed to identify the underlying dimensions of occupational
stress and stress management and Cluster analysis is applied to segment the sample respondents into mutually exclusive groups based on the level of occupational stress and extent of stress management. Pearson product moment correlation analysis is used to assess the correlation among variables under study, that is, among occupational stress, job satisfaction and stress management, in the study. Cross tabulation analysis is carried out to ascertain the extent of association between any two factors. The statistical significance of the association is ascertained using non-parametric Chi-square / Mann-Whitney / Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA tests (wherever applicable). The effect of occupational stress on job satisfaction is analyzed using multiple regression technique. The regression technique is also used to test the moderating effect of stress management on relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction among BPO personnel.

1.8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A review of the scientific literature suggests that there are a number of problems with research into the management of work-related stress.
1. Too narrow a view has often been taken of what constitutes stress management and there has been too strong a focus on ‘caring for or curing’ the individual.

2. Much of what has been offered, even in this narrow respect, either has a weak theoretical base or has been developed from theory outside occupational stress research.

3. There has been a tendency to treat the application of stress management strategies as a self-contained action and to divorce that application from any preceding process of problem diagnosis.

4. Stress management strategies often focus on single types of intervention and rarely are multiple strategies offered.

5. Such interventions are seldom offered for evaluation beyond participants’ immediate reactions or measures of face validity.

There are three common purposes for evaluations of stress management programmes. The first is to ask whether the programme is effective; specifically whether the programmes’ objectives are being met. A second purpose is to determine the efficiency or comparative effectiveness of two or more programmes or methods within a programme. The third purpose is to assess the cost-benefit or the cost-effectiveness of the programme.

Evaluation data on stress management programmes are relatively rare. There are relatively fewer cost-benefit and cost-effectiveness
studies compared to studies on the overall effectiveness of programmes or the relative effectiveness of their component parts. What there is suggests that stress management programmes may be effective in improving the quality of working life of workers and their immediate psychological health, albeit self-reported. The evidence relating such interventions to improvements in physical health is weaker, largely for methodological reasons. There have been several authoritative reviews of organisational and personal stress management programmes in the last ten years reaching broadly similar conclusions.

It must be concluded that “the jury is still out” on stress management training: whilst it seems logical that such interventions should promote employee health, there are not yet sufficient data to be confident that they do. The evidence for employee assistance programmes, particularly those broadly conceived to include health promotion in the workplace, may be more encouraging, although that which relates to counselling alone is weak. The provision of counselling is largely designed to assist employees who are already suffering a problem, and is, in that sense, post hoc. Stressor reduction / hazard control is, for several reasons, the most promising area for interventions, although again, there is not yet sufficient information to be confident about the nature and extent of their effectiveness. To date, such conclusions are based more on moral
and strategic reasoning than on empirical data, although the data that do exist are supportive. What can be firmly concluded, however, is that there is still a need for further and more adequate evaluation studies. Unfortunately, there are very few well designed and evaluated such interventions available in the literature to date. Nonetheless, Murphy\textsuperscript{21} concludes that “job redesign and organisational change remain the preferred approaches to stress management because they focus on reducing or eliminating the sources of the problem in the work environment”. However, they also point out that such approaches require a detailed audit of work beneficial to both individual and organizational health and should be investigated – and evaluated – further.

In summary, there is sufficient scientific evidence to support the following:

- Work-related stress is a current and future health and safety issue;
- Work-related stress can be dealt with in the same logical and systematic way as other health and safety issues;
- the management of stress at work could be based on the adaptation and application of a control cycle approach such as that made explicit in contemporary models of risk management;
- There are already practical examples of this approach in several countries of the World.
The final comment concerns the maturity of stress research as an area of applied science.

Two things must be apparent to the informed reader of this Report. First, there is a wealth of scientific data on work stress, its causes and effects, and on some of the mechanisms underpinning the relationships among these. More general research is not needed. What is required is an answer to the outstanding methodological questions, and to more specific questions about particular aspects of the overall stress process and its underpinning mechanisms. Second, although this wealth of scientific data exists, it still needs to be translated into practice, and the effectiveness of this practice evaluated. This is another set of needs, and one that will only be settled outside the laboratory and through the development of consensus and eventually common practice. While stress at work will remain a major challenge to occupational health, our ability to understand and manage that challenge is improving. The future looks bright.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Chapter I, “Introduction”, gives a brief introduction about the present study, statement of the problem, scope of the study,
objectives, hypothesis, research methodology adopted, limitations and chapter scheme.

**Chapter II**, “Review of Literature”, reviews earlier research work carried out by academics in India and abroad, published in journals, presented as reports, etc, on the area of occupational stress and stress management (stress coping strategies) and their relationship with job satisfaction.

**Chapter III**, “Conceptual Framework”, presents the conceptualization of occupational stress, coping pattern and job satisfaction.

**Chapter IV**, “An Evaluation of Organizational Stress among BPO personnel”, evaluates the status of organization stress among BPO personnel as well as relationship between occupational stress and personal variables.

**Chapter V**, “Stress Management and BPO Personnel”, provides the results and discussion of the analysis pertaining to stress coping strategies adopted by the BPO personnel. The stress management is also compared across respondent groups by personal characteristics in this chapter.

**Chapter VI**, “Relationship between Occupational Stress and Job Satisfaction”, tries to empirically identify the extent of relationship between occupational stress and job satisfaction. In this chapter, the
results of the analysis pertaining to role of stress management in moderating the effect of occupational stress on job satisfaction are also discussed.

The final chapter, Chapter VII titled as “Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Suggestions” summarizes the findings, gives conclusion based on the findings and provide necessary suggestions regarding stress management.

References


