CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Stress

Stress is a much talked about word in today’s time whether or not the seriousness with which to avoid it and to deal with it, is adequate in organizations. Stress today affects almost all in some way or the other. Organisations are group of people and therefore they cannot remain unaffected. If the literature review is of any indication, stress emerges as a key concern in the business world today. The implication of stress are many, including the morale, attrition, overhead costs and poor productivity and therefore there have been many researches that have examined stress and it’s variables. Minter (1999) defines stress as “harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when requirements of a job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker.” Schuler (1982) is of the opinion that stress is “perceived dynamic state involving uncertainty about something important”.

Pestonjee (1992) defines stress as occurring when demands on an individual exceed his adjustment resources. He is of the view that while stress is generally believed to have a deleterious effect of health and performance, recent research has revealed that a minimal level of stress is essential for effective functioning. It is the individual's reaction to stress which makes all the difference and may prove to be harmful. According to him the interest in the issue has been rising and calls the present century as the ‘age of anxiety and stress.’

In the lives of most individuals stress has been identified as a constant condition. Stress affects the life and functioning and therefore there has been an importance of stress as a research topic (Abdollahi, 2002). In addition, Selye, (1956) has been recognised and credited by many researchers as defining the term stress in the context it is presently used (Oxington, 2005). Selye has been quoted by Oxington in Psychology of Stress, saying that there would be no life without stress. According to Oxington, stress is an inevitable result of life.

Stress has been defined and described by many researchers (Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983; Oxington, 2005; Sapolsky, 2004; Selye, 1956; Storch & Panzerella, 1996). Sapolsky defined stress in his book, Why Zebras Don’t Get Ulcers (2004) : “A stressor is anything in the outside
world that knocks you out of homeostatic balance and the stress response is what your body does to re-establish homeostasis”

Sapolsky, (2004) also has explained how anticipation of a stressful event can become a source of stress. Surprisingly, the body reacts in the same predictable way to an actual stressing event as it would to an anticipated stressing event (Sapolsky, 2004). Commonly accepted definitions of stress have also been provided by earlier researchers, such as (Selye, 1956; and Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983).

According to Selye (1956) generalised adaptation theory, stress is defined as any reaction of the body to a demand. Demands can be anything ranging from physical injury or tension to extreme heat or cold. Stressors are either internal or external stimuli that an individual believes to be demanding. Stressors can be psychologically, physically or socially inflicted. In Selye’s theory, the body reacts to stress sequentially, according to three stages. The first is the alarm stage. A typical physical reaction to the alarm stage is movement of the body’s defence mechanisms, such as a change in hormone levels with the expansion of the adrenal cortex. Psychological reactions to the alarm stage occur in three steps: alertness to the stressor, augmented anxiety levels, followed by task and defence oriented behaviours (Selye, 1956).

The resistance stage is the second phase of the body’s reaction to stress. In general, during this stage of resistance, the body tries to adapt to the stressor. Physical reactions aroused during the alarm stage return to normal and psychological reactions turn to coping mechanisms. If the person’s coping is ineffective and this stage is extended, the body moves into the next stage of exhaustion.

In the exhaustion stage, the body cannot resist stress any further. Physical reactions include swelling and depletion of adrenalin glands damage to the lymphatic system. Psychological symptoms can be as severe as disorganisation of perceptions and thoughts. The body exhibits symptoms to damaging stress in biological and psychological manifestations. These manifestations can be anxiety, irritability, headaches, gastrointestinal upset, high blood pressure and depressive symptoms (Selye, 1956).
Lazarus & DeLongis, (1983), who have done extensive work in the field of stress, developed two models of life stress as it exists in the research. These two different models are the *life events* and *daily hassles*. In the life events model, it is argued that certain life events bring about change and force the individual to adapt, causing stress (Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983). The second model, daily hassles, Lazarus and Delongis argued, is the basis of defining stress. Daily hassles is a term used to identify the exasperating and stressful burdens people deal with every day that increases stress levels. Anxiety about losing weight, undemanding work and lack of family time, would all be considered daily hassles.

Certain hassles can be temporary or chronic, but Lazarus and DeLongis believed that it is important to distinguish them from the bigger life-challenging events, such as a death in the family or loss of a job. In Lazarus and DeLongis model, stress is based on the individual’s perception of the stressor. Stress is a complex system of processes and not just a simple variable.

Oxington, (2005) further elaborated on the works of Lazarus and DeLongis. Oxington considered stress to the body’s physical reaction to a situation that is disagreeable. He described how different events cause different degrees of stress; for example, missing the bus or train or waiting in a relatively long queue can cause mild stress, which according to (Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983), would be considered daily hassles. The death of a loved one or loss of a job can cause severe stress, making this type of life changing event a *life event*, according to (Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983).

Stress can also have diverse sequential durations, such as acute and chronic stress. According to Oxington, (2005), chronic stress includes stress that is not short term. Health concerns, lingering problems and financial difficulties may be sources of chronic stress. Acute stress on the other hand is caused by a reaction to a short-lived, urgent threat. This threat can either be real or perceived (Violanti, 1983).

The underlying theme in the working definition of stress is the significance placed on perception. Stress is experienced when social demands and not adequately met by an individual followed by
consequences for not meeting demands. The individual has to perceive an imbalance of demands and response capability in order to feel stress (Violanti, 1983).

**Work related stress**

Triggers causing stress, also known as stressors are “characteristics of the job environment which pose a threat to an individual” (Caplan, Cobb, French, Harison, & Pinneau, 1975). When we talk of good work culture, it is indicative of these stressors being lesser in number, frequency and intensity but no work environment is completely free of these stressors. Systematic efforts to identify, control and manage the factors that induce stress in among the employees is something not all organisations can afford to do.

The other aspect of stress has been looked in other research as a relationship between the employees and their environment, which could probably be seen as an employee stretching his or her resources, endangering his or her health or well being or taxing himself or herself in the process of delivering the duties (Dewe & David, 1990; Lazarus R., 1966; French, Roger, & Cobb, 1974; McGrath, 1970). So in a way it is not improper to relate stress to the negative effects of the workplace in conjunction with employee characteristics, well-being and health (Beehr, 1995; Evans & Cohen, 1987).

The word stress brings to the mind the thought that it is related to an individual but when the implications of job stress are studied it is found that it is dysfunctional to the organisations too (Kahn et al., 1964). Some of the variable that have been found to influence occupational stress are worker control (Spector, 1982), social support (House, 1981) and locus of control (Spector, 1982; Parkes, 1989).

Since work and an individual’s life is intertwined, the stressful experiences at home or at places other than the workplace also has been studied by researchers and it has been observed that on-the-job-experiences are related to off-the-job-experiences (Clark, Nye, & Viktor, 1978). The overall job satisfaction of the employees is found to be good wherever satisfaction with occupational choices, career advancement and personal life exists (Scarpello, Vida, & Campbell, 1983).
Despite Kahn’s extensive research on stress, it was much later that he was recognised as a leader in this field. Kahn et all. (1964) studies explore the variable of role ambiguity, role overload and role-conflict. The variables of role ambiguity, role-overload and role conflict were explored by Kahn’s studies. In order to get or exchange information, take assistance or direction, sales people interact with the customers, superiors or colleagues who are their role-senders. These demands and expectations by the role-senders are perceived as stressors when the sales people believe there is a conflict, among demands; ambiguity about expectations and role overload of demands and expectations. This happens more explicitly when the salesperson witnesses that the expectations and demands of two or more members of his or her role set, say the superior and the customer are incompatible with each other (Kahn et all., 1964). Role ambiguity is a perceived lack of information that a salesperson may need to perform the job adequately; role ambiguity can also be the uncertainty about expectations (Kahn et all., 1964). When a salesperson perceives his role exceeding his or her abilities to perform the tasks, role overload is felt (Kahn et all., 1964). Dispositional, psychological and sociological characteristics influence these perceived stressors. Additionally (Kahn et all., 1964) demonstrates that persistent stressors overwhelm a person’s resources and have a dysfunctional impact on behavioural and psychological job outcomes like job performance and satisfaction.

Correlation between stressors such as role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, resource inadequacy, underutilisation of skills and absenteeism have been found in other studies as well (Gupta & Beehr, 1979; Jamal, 1984). In complete contrast to these observations there is other literature that shows that reducing role stressors (conflict and ambiguity) has the most significant impact on job satisfaction (Brown & Peterson, 1993; Churchill, Ford, Steven, & Walker, 1985; Jackson & Schuler, 1985).

There are quite a few papers that have discussed role overload and its impact on individuals and stress. The role overload and the resultant impact on the individuals and also the results and productivity have been studied. (Caplan & Jones, 1975; Kahn & others, 1964; Sales, 1970). Role overload is explained as, when an individual is expected to do tasks in the given available time. There is pressure felt by the individual while performing his or her role and role overload results in job dissatisfaction (Kahn et.al., 1964). Dwyer & Ganster, (1991) have used the term work
overload in their research and demonstrate that perceived control enhanced the positive relationship between work satisfaction and role overload (See Fig 1).

**Figure 1: Interaction between perceived role overload and work satisfaction**

![Figure 1](image-url)

Source: (Dwyer & Ganster, 1991)

Overload may also impact individuals by means of feelings of tension, anger or personal failure. The lop-sided control over own behaviour, with increased role overload is observed in quite a few individuals. The rational behaviour may get compromised in such people and the results, productivity or the outcome may also get adversely affected. In other cases, role overload can result in increased productivity, yet lower quality of performance (Beehr & Walsh, 1976; O'Connell & others, 1976; Sales, 1970). Connection between perceived role overload and the level of absenteeism, was shown by (Dwyer & Ganster, 1991) which is often measured as a significant withdraw behaviour (See Fig 2). In this study, perception of worker control is a mediating variable; control enhances the positive effects of subjective workload.

**Figure 2: Interaction between perceived role overload and absenteeism**

![Figure 2](image-url)
Encouraging relations play an important role in helping the employees to cope better with role overload (Cohen & T.A., 1985; Cobb, 1976). Social, supportive or emotional support are informative inputs received from others recognizing the individual as a valued individual or that they all belong to the same network of communication and mutual obligation (Cobb, 1976; Thoits, 1983). Support from others provides cushioning effect from stressors and help improve coping with stress. Support and encouragement also helps the individual remain task focused and better prepared for problem resolution, apart from being able to take actions so as to reduce role overload.

We shall continue to discuss literature relevant to the areas of Organisational Role Stress, multiple roles, stress, satisfaction, gender difference, and the mediating factors of hardness, social support and coping strategies. The effects of multiple roles on the individual, has been the topic of some theoretical discussion. In general, there are two opposing viewpoints on how multiple role involvement affects a person. The first viewpoint, represented by Goode (1960), asserts that multiple role involvement has detrimental effects on the individual such as role overload and role conflict. Inter Role Distance is briefly defined as Conflicts between the various roles occupied by an individual. Role Expectation Conflict is defined as Conflicting expectations and demands on a role occupant.

The opposing viewpoint represented by Marks (1977); Sieber (1974) and Thoits, (1983) states that multiple role involvement does not necessarily have negative effects and that it may have
positive effects such as extra rights and privileges, status security, personal enrichment and psychological well-being.

Role strain comprises two overlapping problems: role overload and role conflict. Role strain refers to constraints imposed by time. As role obligations increase sooner or later a time barrier comes up that forces the individuals to honour some role obligations at the expense of attending to others. Role conflict, refers to discrepant expectations irrespective of time pressures. On occasion, the individual must choose between the expectations of two different role obligations because compliance with the expectations of the other. The more roles one accumulates, the greater the probability of exhausting one’s supply of time and energy, and of confronting conflicting obligations, leading to role strain and psychological distress.

Marks (1977); Sieber (1974) and Thoits, (1983) have questioned the assumption that human energy is limited or ‘scarce’ and that multiple role involvement leads only to role strain. Marks (1977) described an alternative approach to human energy. Noting that all multiple role persons do not appear to be struggling with role conflicts or suffering from role overload, he questioned the scarcity of energy and, instead, described an alternative approach wherein involvement in roles does not necessarily use up energy. Instead it may actually create energy for use in that role or in other roles. According to Marks (1977) people seem to find the time and energy for anything they are highly committed to and often feel more energetic after having done it. Thus the human resources of time and energy are flexible and because of that multiple role involvement need not result in role strain.

Sieber (1974) went even further, arguing that being involved in numerous roles which is also termed as, role accumulation, has many rewards. These rewards include rights and privileges that come with the role, resource for status enhancement and role performance, personality enrichment and ego gratification and social security. Role privileges include inherent rights that are built into the role that serves as inducements to recruitment and continuance of role performance. For example, work roles often include vacation time, access to low cost insurance, opportunities for promotions, status and a sense of doing something important. The more roles on occupies, the more privileges one has available (Sieber, 1974).
Similarly Thoits, (1983) asserted that people get a sense of identity from their roles. Role requirements give purpose, meaning, direction and guidance to one’s life. This sense of meaningful existence and purposeful, ordered behaviour are crucial to psychological health. Furthermore roles produce ego-gratification or the sense of being appreciated or needed by others. A lack of roles in people’s lives leaves them without a sense of who they are and how to behave. They may experience anxiety, depression or even severely disorganized behaviour (Rose, 1962).

Pareek (1975) for the sake of convenience uses the word role for any position a person holds in an organisation or system and the term function to indicate a set of inter-related expectations from a role. An individual may occupy several roles. Pestonjee, (1992) stresses that “one of the key concepts to understand the integration of the individual with an organisation is the role assigned to him within the overall structure of the organisation.” Prof Pestonjee further adds that the definition of role indicates that there are inherent problems in the performance of a role and, therefore, stress is inevitable.

**Stress and Interpersonal Needs**

To some extent personality traits, interpersonal needs, attitudes toward work and interactions between people and organizational stress are inter-woven. This study attempts to find out the correlation between the personality, interpersonal needs and the organisational role stress. In an organization among the staff members group situation behaviour may exist that may appear illogical or inconsistent. Many such behavioural actions are a result of a personality.

Schein (1970) observed that instead of treating the individual as a separate entity against the organisation it is better to consider integrating him or her into various groups which show a pattern based on competition, cooperation or indifference towards one another. Studying the behavioural patterns and predispositions for individual employees in specific work groups, may be helpful in improving the functioning of an organization and also can help the employees.
Sociometric and psychometric theory and evaluations were widely advocated in the beginning of the twentieth century which were followed by many personality theories. Theorists like Watson and Tolman soon focused their attention on whether individual behaviour was purposive (Hall & Lindzey, 1970). Methods for the normal personality measurement and assessment kept getting developed during the first half of century.

The emphasis on personality distinguished the theory of wholism and this made the new concept different from the other research work. The importance of considering an individual as total, functioning unit was propagated by (Hall & Lindzey, 1970). Further interest towards this the personality theory was built with (Lewin, 1935) emphasising on the study of ‘total individual’ within a context or ‘field’.

Based on literature spread between 1900 to 1957, Mann in 1959 published a review relating personality variables to small groups. He systematically came out with a categorisation of some 350 separate measures of personality into seven generic headings: adjustments, conservatism, dominance, extroversion-introversion, intelligence, interpersonal sensitivity and masculinity-femininity. Mann (1959) mentions that a most of the group related personality research revolves around leadership. Bass (1981); Cartwright (1965) and Stogdill (1974) also reported that leadership studies constituted the majority of personality related research. Many summary statements relative to the leadership, in small study groups were found by Mann (1959): adjustment, extroversion and intelligence all are related, in a positive way, to leadership.

Reporting the findings of many studies Mann (1959) additionally found a high and positive correlation between dominance, masculinity and interpersonal sensitivity and leadership, while conservatism seemed to be negatively related. Two inadequacies were pointed out by Borgatta (1962) in a review similar to Mann’s: The personality classifications are subjective and the assorted studies have a large range of conditions, and this raises a multiple difficulties in defining leadership. One of the suggested ways to overcome some of the shortcomings in Mann’s approach, Borgatta (1962) advocates smaller studies that overlap by virtue of using the same well-defined marker variables.
Taking a cue from what Borgatta observed, Hare (1976) with review of the literature of small group research purposes “to make available……a catalogue of the field together with some suggestions of principles by which it may be organized”. One of his three major subdivisions emphasizes the deviations from typical patterns in group interpersonal behaviour that result from variations in such factors as members’ personality and leadership. He notes in agreement with Bales (1956) predictions from personality data to interpersonal behaviour can take a number of forms. However, he notes that factor analysis of studies of personality have indicated a narrowed listing of the independent dimensions which may account for the major variations. “While the studies report many different factors, depending upon the population studied and the interest of the investigator, a typical list of factors is the one given by (Mann 1959). Hare (1976) found that the seven personality factors in turn can be seen as variations of four dimensions representing tendencies towards assertiveness, sociability, task accomplishment and conforming behaviour.

Descriptions Hare (1976) employs are: ‘dominance’ associated with high social interaction in a group and a specialization in task accomplishment; ‘submissiveness’, associated with behaviour which is supporting, modifying or rejecting; ‘positiveness’, associated with warm, personal and cooperative behaviour and a willingness to self-disclosure and be personal; ‘seriousness’ although few personality traits are directly correlated with this dimension, the combination of high intelligence and high anxiety produces a very serious task oriented person; conformity (versus nonconformity) relates to the acceptance of a controlling authority structure.

Hare’s research noted that among the studies the consistency of personality-related behaviours increases with the similarity of situations and that relationships between personality traits and interpersonal behaviours can be increased. If the characteristics of the other group members are considered. Hare’s literature review also noted that “Considering total personality as a cluster of traits, a common finding in research……is that there are two basic personality types among leaders. Some are self-oriented (authoritarian), rather hostile persons with a driving need to be in the centre of a group’s activities, while others are group oriented (equalitarian) persons who are able to reduce tension in a group, work toward a common goal, and take a follower route when it is appropriate” (Hare, 1976). Hare (1976) found that this dichotomous leader behaviour particularly in studies involving young subjects.
The findings summarised in this review of Mann (1959) and Hare (1976) research relate to this study’s focus on interpersonal-personality traits. In particular, the intension of two or the three instruments selected for use in this study is to measure a subject’s scores on group related personality traits.

“Personality” was defined by Larsen & Buss (2002) as a set of psychological traits within an individual that are organized and relatively enduring and that influence his or her intentions with, and adaptations to, the environment. According to Larsen and Buss (2002) personality is an influential force in an individual’s life. Personality has an effect on people’s actions, interactions, feelings, goals and reactions (Larsen & Buss, 2002).

Personality is generally assessed at three different levels. The first level is the human nature level (Larsen & Buss, 2002) or examining how humans are like all others (Kluckhohn & Murray, 1948). Personality analysis at this level describes personality traits that are considered typical of the human species and that nearly everyone possesses (Larsen & Buss, 2002).

The second level of personality analysis occurs at “the level of individual and group differences” (Larsen & Buss, 2002) or examining how humans are like some others (Kluckhohn & Murray, 1948). At this level of analysis, researchers assess personality differences between groups of people (Larsen & Buss, 2002). The third level of analysis is the individual uniqueness level (Larsen & Buss, 2002) or examining how humans are like no others (Kluckhohn & Murray, 1948). Personality researchers at this level believe that every individual is unique or no two individuals possess exactly the same personality characteristics (Larsen & Buss, 2002).

Individual personality differences studied by researchers in the second level (individual and group differences) can be examined using Big-Five measures of personality. Big-Five measures of personality assess where on a continuum of personality characteristics an individual falls (Larsen & Buss, 2002). Individual personality differences studied by researchers in the second level (individual and group differences) can be examined using Big-Five measures of personality. Big-Five measures of personality assess where on a continuum of personality characteristics an individual falls.
Galton (1884) was credited by John, Angleitner & Ostendorf (1988) as the first researcher to organize personality descriptors. According to John et al., Galton’s work was not scientifically systematic and insignificant as the work done by him was allegedly accomplished by simply scanning the dictionary. Klages (1926) was recognized by Hart, Wearing & Heady (1995) as the first theorist to generate interest in developing personality descriptors. Klages implied that research in the area of personality traits should begin by studying language. Many earlier personality-trait researchers, Allport & Odbert (1936), for example focused on compiling lists of personality traits that proved to be difficult as well as daunting John, Angleitner, & Ostendorf (1988).

Allport & Odbert (1936) complied a list of approximately 18,000 English words that could be used to describe personality traits and behaviours. As a means of organizing these descriptive words, the researchers arranged the descriptors into four categories: ‘neutral terms designating possible personality traits’; ‘descriptive of temporary moods or activities’; ‘weighted terms conveying social and characterial judgments’ and ‘miscellaneous’ (p. 38).

According to Digman (1990), subsequent research has focused on further narrowing personality factors into five general dimensions of personality. Early research labelled the dimensions as follows: Surgency, Agreeableness, Dependability, Emotional Stability and Culture (Fiske, 1949; Goldberg, 1992; Norman, 1963; Tupes & Christal, 1961). Goldberg (1992) found the five factors of personality to be acceptably labelled and numbered as follows: ‘I. Surgency (or Extraversion); II. Agreeableness; III. Conscientiousness (or Dependability); IV. Emotional Stability (vs. Neuroticism); and V. Culture, Intellect or Openness’ (p. 26).

The aforementioned personality factors have been used empirically study personality. Although these factors describe personality dimensions, they do not define personality. Personality can be described as factors that describe different individuals as they are and also the factors that have brought about the known personality (Gendlin, 1964). According to classical personality theorists cited in Kelly (1955), personality should be examined as a multidimensional trend that is moulded and shaped by events. Gendlin (1964) theory of personality change follows classical
theorists and is based on the concept of experience as an ongoing, concrete process in which an individual senses and feels. Basically, Gendlin theorised that an individual’s personality may change as a result of his or her experiencing process and the connection between that process and characteristics of his or her personality.

Personality characteristics become evident when a person acts in a way that seems to contradict the circumstances that surround the individual (Gendlin, 1964). As an example, the sales persons have to be gentle, polite and courteous despite the performance pressure and other adversities they have to face. At the time of selection assessing the candidates for their emotional intelligence goes a long way in grooming them into customer-centric sales people. Similarly for the police personnel being likeable and secure despite the overwhelmingly bed circumstances they encounter during the job is essential. Personality characteristics are important determinants when police agencies hire officers. It is common practice for each one applicant to go through rigorous screening process (Varela, Boccaccini, Scogin, Stump, & Caputo, 2004).

Mental health professional are usually contracted to screen job candidates for major mental illnesses and personality characteristics that may inhibit optimum job performance. According to Varela, Boccaccini, Scogin, Stump & Caputo (2004), the screening process is imperative because police officers are assigned the task of protecting the community from harm. Unacceptable candidates who are perhaps unable to maintain their responsibilities as an officer may be identified through psychological screening. Research has demonstrated that personality characteristics are correlated with job performance (Gonder & Gilmore, 2004; Hogan & Holland, 2003; Nowicki, 1999 and Varela, Boccaccini, Scogin, Stump, & Caputo, 2004).

According to Costa & McCrae (1990) to assess stress - the demands placed on the individual by his or her environment - life-event checklists and lists of daily hassles have been widely used. Such instruments are intended to reflect harmful, threatening, or challenging aspects of the environment, but they are likely to be strongly influenced by characteristics of the respondent, especially the personality disposition of neuroticism. Individuals high on this dimension perceive life as stressful, cope poorly, are dissatisfied with social supports, have low psychological well-being, and make more somatic complaints. Costa & McCrae, (1990) suggested that neuroticism,
also referred to as emotional instability, can be defined as “an enduring disposition to experience psychological distress (p.23). This lasting distress affects how the individual perceives his or her environment. Ways of coping, perceptions of stress, and psychological well-being are all influenced by the presence of absence of emotional stability as personality characteristics (Costa & McCrae, 1990). Rowlison & Felner (1988) found in their research that students who scored high on neuroticism scales – meaning they perceive the world around themselves as difficult – are evaluated by their teachers as having poor adaptation skills. These data indicated that stress in normal individuals is different from the seemingly constant distress of neurotic individuals.

A more recent research by Hart, Wearing & Heady (1995) suggest that when a person is in an authoritative job, personality characteristics influence his or her perception of his or her work environment and pattern of work experiences. Personality characteristics that were found to be influential were neuroticism and extroversion. Individuals found to score high on emotional instability scales would need to be monitored by supervisors due to their predisposition to experience stress (Vollrath, 2001). Stress is a transactional phenomenon (Barone, Katell, Caddy, R., & Roselione, 1984; Lazarus R., 1966; McGrath, 1976 and Beehr & Newman, 1978). In this way stress is a result of mismatch between demands from the boss or job requirements and the capabilities of the salesperson. Stress which is a transactional construct centers on the appraisal of this perceived misfit by the individual, on associated psychological conditions (emotional, motivational etc) and physiological changes, which form the basis for approval (Barone, Katell, Caddy, R., & Roselione, 1984). Stress as a result of incongruence between the person and the environment is the most important concept in the Person-Environment Fit theory.

In the research and development of the Person-Environment Fit theory, stress is a variable. The ideas of P-E fit are mentioned in the research by Lewin (1951) and Murray (1938). Though these researches described the P_E Fit theory but some of the issues were addressed more specifically by Pervin (1968) in his research. Taking P-E Fit research ahead towards development Pervin (1968) assumes that for each individual, there is an environment which more or less matches the characteristics of the individual’s personality. Johnson (1999) taking Pervin’s theory ahead in his research adds that environments that match the personality characteristics of the individual encourage positive interaction between organisation and the individual. Pervin (1968) is of the
opinion that the best fit can be evaluated by improved performance, job satisfaction and low stress levels.

Fit is defined as a person’s values, goals, needs and personality characteristics, closely matched and aligned with the values, goals, climate and the ethics within an organisation (Kristof, 1996). It is important to note that when discussing Environment-Person Fit theory, fit and congruence are often used interchangeably.

The six different types of personality employees have are conceptualised by Holland (1973) which are a product of the individual’s cultural and personal influences. The individual interests and competencies creates a temperament or personality that leads to a certain type of perceptions, thoughts and actions (Holland, 1973; Furnham & Walsh, 1991). The environment that is most befitting to the personality of the employee is found to be the most comfortable one for the individual (Furnham & Walsh, 1991; Holland, 1973) and this is the person-environment fit as a congruency between the individual and the environment. The environments that provide the similar tastes, similar values and offer the employees the ability to perform tasks that they are able to do and enjoy, provide job satisfaction. Incongruence occurs when the employee is not satisfied with the working conditions or the rewards of the job.

The employee often has his or her own assessment and direct measurement of fit. P-E Fit theory emphasises that lack of harmony between objective job demands and the subjective worker needs invariably results in worker distress and individual perceptions of their workplace are as important as the stressors. If employee believe that a good fit exists between them and the organisation, then a fit exists ‘as long as it is perceived to exist’ (Kristof, 1996). So it is quite obvious for the individuals to compare the demands of the work environment with their own capabilities (Jones, 1999). The P-E Fit theory also mentions that the stressfulness or ‘strain’ felt by an individual employee is determined by the degree of fit between the individual and the job environment (French, Roger, & Cobb, 1974). The Person Environment Fit theory also states that job stress is a result of incongruence of the relationship between the employee and the job environment (French, Roger, & Cobb, 1974; Lofquist & Dawis, 1969; Posner, 1985; Siguaw Judy A, Brown, & Widing, 1994; Van, 1978)
Coping

Other than the types of stress, the stressors and various ways stress impact different individuals, researchers have also put many efforts to examine how people cope with stress in work environment. This research also focuses of coping methods because only then certain outcome can be seen which when implemented can help the individuals as well as the organisations.

Dewe & Guest (1990) and Folkman (1984) defined coping as “the cognitive and behavioural efforts used to master, reduce or tolerate the internal and external demands that are created by the stressful transaction.” As soon as something stressful occurs, the immediate response by the individual is a consequence of their individual appraisal of that stressor. The next response is to implement coping mechanisms in response to a stressor (Schuler, 1982). The two coping functions have been classified as emotion-focused coping and the problem-focused coping. In a stressful situation an individual will use either of them. Emotion-focused coping “attempts to reduce or eliminate the emotional distress associated with a stressful situation” (Scheck, Kinicki, & Davy, 1995).

There are some individuals who are much less affected by the stress compared to the others and in their research. Kobasa & Puccetti (1983) characterised such personality as ‘hardiness’ which is comprised of permutation and combination of different degrees of Control, Commitment and Challenge. People who are able to control or influence their experiences; are involved in activities that influence their lives and the ones who accept their surroundings, including the potential stressors are said to be more ‘hardy’ and cope with stress better.

Pestonjee (1992) points out that the effectiveness of the style of coping with the stress depends upon the situation, the point of time the stress is being felt and what may be considered appropriate in a given situation might prove to be ineffective or even damaging in another situation.