Chapter III

The Problem/Hypothesis
The Problem/Hypothesis

Introduction
The twentieth century, with all its achievements and advances, in technology, in science, in communication, in transport and space craft, is characterized by the tremendous stress among human beings.

Mankind, nay humankind, in this century has gone through an unprecedented degree of stress, anxiety, tension, conflict, neurosis and feeling of insecurity. The feeling of stress became inseparable part of life for most of the people in this century.

There might be many reasons and causes for this stress: Fast pacing technology at tremendous pace which many people (particularly in developing countries) could not understand and cope-up or could not even afford to cope-up with.

The tremendous gap between market-induced consumerist demands, expectations and appetites on one side and the people’s inability to fulfill these expectations due to various economic, social, natural and biological factors/limitations on the other.

In general, and for many, life in twentieth century is characterized by stress due to feeling of helplessness, despondency and ‘alienation’.

“The feeling of alienation” is particularly more among the vast majority of marginalized people in the developing Afro-Asian countries.

Stress among the youth particularly college students is more for various reasons. It may be due to the communication gap, nay generation gap, between the parents and their children (due to lack of understanding between two). May be due to the expectation-gap, an unbridgeable gap between their ever increasing expectations on the one side and their inability to fulfill them on the other exists.

The stress among the college students – particularly in a country like India – may be due to faulty education system, due to lack of job opportunities and above all due to the lack of sufficient opportunities and challenges to
students to occupy their dynamic and creative energy and impulses. The stressful state of mind among them is aggravated by the feeling of insecurity, helplessness and deprivation. It may be also due to adolescence-trauma, which is characterized by indecision, confusion-conflict and lack of clarity and direction!

The present research attempts to study various stress-coping styles and different factors and mechanisms (in other words personality correlates) which influence them in terms of ‘experimental attitude’, ‘being flexible’, ‘structured approach’, ‘assertive behavior’, ‘being proactive’, ‘self analytical’, ‘function strategically’, ‘seeking social support’, ‘self controlling’ and ‘accepting responsibility’ and which in turn are affected/impacted by the gender and age of the person.

The study is the result of the painstaking research by the author on the subject. It is a precious contribution to the field, for it deepens insight on the subject: stress-coping methods and strategies, particularly among the college students in Mumbai city.

In 1996, Lazarus defined “coping mechanisms” as strategies used by the individual to deal with threat. When framed this way, coping becomes the mediator between the stressor and the psychological or physiological response of the individual.

Individuals differ in the way they respond to stress. Personal makeup of the individual plays a decisive role in the selection of coping strategies. The personal makeup is determined by the familial and social upbringing of the individual. The culture in which people grow plays an important role in deciding what is stressful, to what extent it can be dealt with, the personal belief of each individual regarding their ability to deal with it, and finally, the type of coping options they choose.

Both Indian and western writers agree that it is not stress per se, but the way we perceive it, that is important (Lazarus, 1993). In essence, this is what the Indian author Ramachandra Rao (1983) meant when he stated that “stress is in the eyes of the beholder”.

This study was conducted in Mumbai; India, a country rich in cultural and spiritual heritage, where traditional values are revered and continue to play important roles in decision making. The research was based on the assumption that this unique culture will influence the appraisal of stress situations and the selection of coping styles.

More specifically, the study investigated the relationship between gender, age, experimental attitude, being flexible, structured approach, assertive behaviour, being proactive, self analytical, function strategically, seeking social support, self controlling and accepting responsibility and the coping styles of a group on college students in Mumbai city.

**Description, Details, History and Criticality**

**Purpose of the study**

This research was undertaken in Mumbai; India, a country rich in cultural and spiritual heritage. In the past 50 years the country has been tremendous changes in terms of industrialization and westernization of society. Despite of these changes, a vast majority of the population holds on to traditional values while balancing modern views. The cultural environment in this country provides a unique setting for dealing with life stress.

Personal self that determines the coping responses of the individual is greatly influenced by the cultural background. This research is based on the premise that an individual’s response to stress is influenced by cultural background as well as by personality variables.

Bearing in mind the fact that the Indian culture plays an important role in the way individuals view stress, appraisal, and the coping options, and that the selection of the coping styles are going to be moderated by personality variables, this investigation was undertaken to examine the coping styles of the Indian People, specifically Mumbai college students. The research emphasizes on gender, age, experimental attitude, being flexible, structured approach, assertive behaviour, being proactive, self analytical, function strategically, seeking social support, self controlling and accepting responsibility and the coping styles of a group on college students in Mumbai city.
Cultural Influence on selection of coping styles

People choose different ways of coping on the basis of their appraisal of stress situations. One factor that is seen as influencing the coping strategies selected is the cultural background of the individual (Nakano, 1991). Different cultures sanction different kinds of coping processes. Even the same culture viewed over time may change in what it permits, encourages, or discourages the individual to do in terms of coping. The way people defend themselves against stress reflects the ways favoured in their culture. In general, people have options in the way they choose to cope, but an option in one culture may not be an option in another culture. Value systems and motivational patterns are powerful factors in the appraisal of threat. Belief systems underlying these appraisals and selections are heavily influenced by cultural values. Appraisal of a situation determines the coping style employed. Stress appraisal depends to a large extent on the individual as well as his or her cultural background and value system.

Influence of Indian Culture on Coping Appraisal

There are some cultural philosophies and outlooks on life relevant to this culture that could influence the appraisal and coping selections of the Indian population investigated in this study. This section considers some of these ideas and reviews the research conducted in India dealing with appraisal and coping selections.

Our country is a vast country with many spoken languages across the length and width of the country. Every 25 kms you travel the language changes into sub-language. Our country has many religions and each one has its own importance and prominence. Though the basic religion of this country is Hindu there are other religion people who invaded this country and they are Muslims and after them came the British emperors with Christianity as their religion. Parsis came from Iran. The Sikhs from Punjab fought the Muslims for long. Our country is also known for its spirituality and the Jains & Buddhist are responsible for creating the awareness of the same. We also have innumerable caste and sects and plenty of spiritual leaders whom we address as gurus and each one have their ashrams spread across the country (Guzdur & Krishna, 1991). Since these sub cultures within the Indian culture may be operating under different rules it is important...
to heed Lazarus’ caution against overgeneralization that might characterize national or social character.

The cultural outlook or the philosophy of India predisposes the individual to look at the stress and coping options available in a specific way. In tradition takes a holistic approach to human phenomena. For some time, stress studies conducted in the west have emphasized the body-mind relationship. In India, this point of view goes back many centuries to “ayurveda,” a system of medicine in ancient India that is still practiced today. The holistic approach in the west considers the body as well as the mind in the treatment of the human being, but the Indian tradition goes beyond that. The body mind level of analysis of the being is treated as less significant than the analysis at a higher level of the self, which is equated with the transcendental self, Brahman, or the ultimate reality. Any distress, whether physical or mental, is seen as imbalance of body and mind within the context of functioning at the higher level of selfhood.

One outlook on stress in Indian culture is to look at the nature of the individual existence and move systematically to its malfunctioning to see how stress is generated. The other alternative is to start with the problem and weave the principles around it as is done in the Bhagawad Gita. Indian philosophy looks at strong desires as maladaptive. Strong desires also lead to inflexible problem-solving strategies cited Shankaracharya as saying in Yogatarvali Verse 19, “Oh wise man, we show you one way to achieve the transcendental state. Uproot the desires cautiously and look at the world without attachment”. (p.4) The Bhagwad Gita, one of the scriptural trinity of Indians, explains the ideal philosophy looks at each adverse life event as the result of his Karma and as something that has to be accepted and borne whether it is good or bad, easy or hard. Although there are elements of fatalism in this philosophy, it does not require one to renounce work or deeds. Rather, the tradition requires action in this philosophy; it does not require one to renounce work or deeds. Rather, the tradition requires that one should do one’s assigned job to the best of one’s ability while foregoing the expectancy of any outcome. Renouncing the expectancy reduces the possibility of frustration and consequent stress. In this manner, the individual is prepared to accept the adversities in life and is protected from possible frustration by de-emphasizing the outcomes.
The Gita points to the Indian view regarding the importance of cognitive processes in minimizing role conflicts and eliminating tensions between evaluation, anticipation, and performance processes. This religious belief provides a framework for coping behavior. In many ways this framework provides a way out for the individual in stressful situations that are out of personal control. At such times it gives people permission to feel that “it is out of my hands,” and accept it without suffering the guilt that individuals from other societies can endure. The western culture focuses on environmental events that produce stress, while the Indian tradition focuses on the goals and expectancies the individual brings to the potentially stressful situation and the avoidance of stress via internal control.

The social practices and upbringing of the individual influence the appraisal of stress and selection of coping patterns just as much as the individual’s philosophical attitudes. In India, the psychological development of a child follows a different path than in the western tradition. The child is looked upon as an innocent being that is a gift from the gods to be welcomed and appreciated and even indulged for the first few years of life. The gradual detachment of a strong independent ego in the western traditions is not a feature of early childhood in India. Maintenance of ego boundaries is the reality in western thought but looked upon as an illusion by Hindus. An Indian child is encouraged to be dependent. Parents and extended family cater to every need of the child. From this unchecked indulgence a striking change occurs in late childhood. There is an imposition of new inflexible standards of absolute obedience and conformity to strict social and family standards (Kakar, 1979).

The Indian society looks upon self-assertion as a very strong statement which can also be seen as positive declaration which is not really appreciated. In such situation the individual sometimes learns to play it safe by restoring to passive aggressive behavior or become totally passive. Indian culture makes it difficult to stand up to the valued western behaviors of confronting others or standing up for one’s needs without appearing to be disloyal to the family or authority.

There is a distinct gender difference in the upbringing of children in India. There are different expectations for women which brings forth different responses to life situations. The cultural and traditional paradigms in India has a conflicting image of a women, one side they project her as a
motherly figure but at the same time she is not respected properly and treated like a slave. For centuries, Hindu mythologies have influenced the culture. For this reason, they are important in understanding the vulnerabilities of women as well as the dimension of the male and female relationship needs to be focused on. The Hindu mythology and the Indian past history has never accepted a male and female as a pure friends but always have doubted their interactions and relationship. (Guzdur & Krishna, 1991)

In Indian mythology there is the powerful female presence in the form of various goddess and various names have been used to describe them. In Bengal we hear goddess Durga during dassera festival. Goddess Padmavati is linked to Tirupati. Under different names and forms she represents life, procreative power of the universe, giver of the nurturance, and destroyer of evil that is beyond the reach of masculine gods. She is also viewed as “Lakshmi,” the goddess of wealth who will bring prosperity to her family is associated with the temple in Kolhapur (Guzdur & Krishna, 1991). The woman is further conceived as Shakti. Shakti is a counterpoint and the sustainer and the withholder or giver of abundance and plenty. Alternatively, she is mystery, enigma and the holder of the secret knowledge of creation so man has to propitiate her through devotion and homage.

Feminine identifications embody the ideals portrayed in the heroines of Indian mythology. These include ideas of contentment, devotion, forbearance, passivity and so forth, as portrayed by Sita, Savithri, Draupadi and other feminine ideals who selflessly follow their husbands and perform their duty even when they are degraded or insulted (Guzdur & Krishna, 1991). Therefore, it follows that the roles for Indian women are set as the ones who give life, sustain life, and maintain harmony at any cost and sacrifice to themselves.

In traditional India, women are identified not as individuals, but rather as extensions of others, namely, she is a daughter of so and so person, she is wife of so and so person and the most treasured role, as mothers of sons. As such, their identity is grounded in the relationships they have (Baig, 1976; Guzdur & Krishna, 1991). Mature feminine identity is epitomized in Pativrata as “one who is devoted to her husband’. Because of these preordained roles, they are always at the receiving end. When they react against, or even “feel” against, tradition they are hounded with terrible guilt and conflict that leads to mental distress (Guzdar & Krishna, 1991).
There is little or no escape from traditional roles. While true for both Indian men and women, men are perhaps even less capable of releasing themselves from their roles. Indian society leaves few or no avenues for an individual to transcend role boundaries. Even when young men and woman start to carve out a space for themselves and redefine their roles, they are soon confronted with the time honored modes of the subordinate type. The demand of the “good son” role at times leads the individual to lose initiative and to give in to being “owned” by parents or the organizations they work for. This is a culture where family cohesion, loyalty to relatives, and dependency and co-dependency patterns are normative (Guzdur and Krishna. 1991). Such cultural constraints and upbringings predispose the men and women in India to look at and deal with life events in uniquely Indian ways.

**Hypothesis:**
Most of the students face tremendous stress in their studies at some stage or other, which may result in their physical and mental problems. Students have to adopt some strategies/measures for coping the stress effectively. Otherwise they remain the victims of the stress and as a result under-performer.

**Assumptions:**
- Stress is inseparable part of modern student life.
- Study-stress may be more in the metro cities.
- Successful students adopt better stress coping strategies than the underperformers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coping Method</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

$H_{1,0}$ - Null Hypothesis - Gender has no relationship with symptoms of stress.
H₁.₁ - Alternate Hypothesis. Gender has a relationship (more prone to) with symptoms of stress.

H₂.₀ - Null Hypothesis. Faculty has no relationship with symptoms of stress.

H₂.₁ - Alternate Hypothesis. Faculty has a relationship (more prone to) with symptoms of stress.

H₃.₀ - Null Hypothesis. Coping Strategies of students/respondents has no relationships with gender.

H₃.₁ - Alternate Hypothesis. Coping Strategies of students/respondents has a relationships (more prone) with gender.

H₄.₀ - Null Hypothesis. Faculties has no relationships with Coping Strategies of the students.

H₄.₁ - Alternate Hypothesis. Faculties has a relationship (more prone) with Coping Strategies of the students.

**Methodology:**

**Research Design:**
It was exploratory as well as investigative. Aim was to study the various features of stress; such as causes, consequences and coping strategies.

**Universe and Sampling:**
The universe for the study consist students, in Mumbai metro. The respondents were chosen on the stratified random basis representing both boys and girls. A sample of 300 respondents was taken from Smt. P. D. Tibrewala group of colleges (BA, BCom, BMS & BSc(IT)) Andheri (E), Somaiya group of colleges (BPTh, MBBS & BE), Sion (E), and all of them belonging to final year degree course only.
**Pilot Testing:**

(*Pai, 1998*) The three questionnaires used for collecting the data are YOUR TYPE BEHAVIOR, SYMPTOMS OF STRESS QUESTIONNAIRE and PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGIES IN MANAGING STRESS from the thesis on “A study on perspective of stress among women managers.”

The pilot test was conducted at Smt. P. D. Tibrewala College of Arts, Commerce and Science, Andheri. The sample size was 76 (38 male and 38 female). These respondents were from final year of BA, BCom, BSc (IT), BMS and BBI.

**YOUR TYPE BEHAVIOR Questionnaire:** -
The instruction given in this questionnaire was – Please circle the number which you feel most closely represents your own behavior and the scale range was from -5 to +5. In all 11 numbers which was very confusing for the respondents to handle. Even there were statements at the both the sides of this scale. Most of the respondents use to mark two numbers. E.g.; Question 1 they use to circle -5 and +5 also. This was the case with all the 14 questions in the questionnaire and with most of the respondents.

Now after this the entire scaling was revised from 11 nos. to 3 nos. i.e 3, 2 & 1 and/or 1, 2 & 3.

**SYMPTOMS OF STRESS Questionnaire:** -
Here the instruction given was – Below is a list of different troubles and complaints which students often have. For each one please tick the column which tells how often you have felt like during the last three months.

The students used to get confused and tick more than one. We changed it to tick any one only and gave the numeric scaling along with the verbal which brought a lot of clarity. A lot =4, Quite often = 3, occasionally = 2 & Never = 0.

Even Yes = 1 & No = 0.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEGIES IN MANAGING STRESS Questionnaire:** -
Here it was observed that the students at time’s use to do mechanically and write the numbers in the ascending order which was a pattern. Subsequently care was taken to avoid the pattern to be created or repeated and the data subsequently collected with the other respondents was clean and apt.

The entire three new questionnaires are attached in the appendices. A written permission from all the Principals was taken and the letter is attached in the appendices. With proper timing, co-ordination with the heads and coordinators of the respective colleges the entire data collection schedule was executed. A proper presentation was made to all the respondents (303 nos.) before distributing the questionnaire. The objective of the research was explained and how the data collected will be analyzed was also explained. As an attitude of gratitude on the request from the faculty conducting the class a small talk on the Goals and Time management was given. Also how to manage Stress was also included in that talk which was very well appreciated by the students and they found the tip given to them quite useful.

**Data Collection and Analysis:**

**Universe of the study:**

**Frequency Table – TOTAL SAMPLE AND SEX OF THE RESPONDENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>303</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table shows the girls constitute roughly 60% of the sample while boys are more than 39%. This helped the researcher for analyzing the gender wise differences in stress coping methods throughout the research.
The above table shows commerce stream consisting BCOM, BBI, BMS and BFM constitute about 50% of the sample; While BA, BSC and general degrees constitute only 14% of the sample. On the other professional health courses consisting MBBS and BPTH constitute 22% of the sample. While BE students account to 14%. In short 36% sample, belong to the professional course students while around 50% belong to commerce and management stream.

Comprehensive questionnaires relating to various features of stress including the stress coping strategies were adopted/drafted and administered to the students for the collection of the data. Detailed Personal profiles were collected from the sample of students to gain greater insight into
their stress coping strategies. The collected data was tabulated and presented in the form of tables and graphs. Data was statistically treated. The chi-square test was used to analyze the data.

By applying factor analysis, the grouping is done. i.e. (Various questions in $X_n$ and $Y_n$)

**Procedure - Ethical Considerations**

Since the research involved human subjects, caution was exercised to adhere to the ethical guidelines of the human subjects committee. The participants were assured that the decision to participate was entirely voluntary, that safeguards would be taken to maintain the confidentiality of the data. To assure them that their responses would remain anonymous and that they were free to refuse to participate without fear of reprisal or appearing to be disrespectful, the questionnaires were given to them and return it directly to the investigator (myself).

There was no monetary gain or class credit given to the respondents. If the faculty and students were interested, I offered a 1-hour presentation on effective ways of coping and stress reduction techniques. A couple of colleges invited me to come and talk to groups of students.

**Administration of Questionnaires**

The principal/Dean of the institutions was contacted by me individually to obtain permission to conduct the survey in campus classrooms. After obtaining permission from instructors, I distributed the instruments in individual classrooms during regular class hours.

All the instruments were paper and pencil questionnaires. In addition to a half page demographic questionnaire, the subjects were asked to respond to 3 self-report instruments. It took participants about 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. After the respondents completed the survey, I collected the questionnaire and thanked the participants.
Chapterisation

1) Preamble (Introduction, Problem on hand, importance and Scope of the project)
2) Organization (where work is carried out) products, processes, profile
3) The Problem/Hypothesis (Introduction, description, details, history, Criticality etc.)
4) Relevant Literature review
5) Data Collection and Analysis
6) Result and Discussion
7) Recommendations and Summary Gains, Limitations, Scope for further works
8) References
9) Appendixes