

Chapter-I

Introduction

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Key Terms:

- 1) ***I/O Psychology***: *The study of a branch of psychology where issues related to industries and organizations are dealt with including human resources of the concerned organization.*
- 2) ***ORS***: *'Organizational Role Stress' – it includes ten different variables and measures the extent of stressfulness through role elements of the job.*
- 3) ***GPO***: *General Post Office situated in every Postal Circle in India.*
- 4) ***SPSS***: *Statistical Package for Social Science, generally used for empirical analysis of any social studies.*
- 5) ***ED***: *Extra Departmental Staff of the Indian Postal Department.*

1.1 Introduction

Job stress can be defined as a condition at work interacting with workers' characteristics to disrupt their psychological or physiological state. The casual, situational conditions are identified as potential stressors and the disrupted health condition of the job occupant is named as job related strain or stress. Margolis and Kroes (1974)¹ suggested that there are at least five dimensions of job related stress: short term subjective states (e.g., anxiety, tension and anger), long term and more chronic psychological response (e.g., depression, alienation or detachment), transient physiological changes (e.g., high blood pressure, heart pounding etc.), physical health (e.g., stomach problems, coronary heart disease) and work performance disorder. This is primarily a question in relation to the employee health and has been getting its importance in the field of Industrial and Organizational psychology as because the involvement of the job and job condition of the organization have been liable for the generation of stress among the employees.

It is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity with a constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important. Job stress is generally experienced by a job occupant primarily due to the constituent factors of the particular job. All these factors are not necessarily the inherent stressors. In fact, personal characteristics of the employee, his/her cognitive appraisal of the job elements within his/her capacity and the ready resources at his personal disposal determine the extent of stress he/she would experience from a job factor or from a particular combination of job factors. It is perhaps a difficult task to categorize or generalize a particular job, job condition or a work setting as universal stressors; instead we can only predict some of the potential factors or conditions, which may cause job stress. However, all the employees do not respond uniquely under same stressful condition. The pressure caused by a

particular job factor, in fact, is negotiated by the very personal characteristics of the employee concerned.

On the other side of the coin, it would not be a true statement if only job conditions are made responsible for job stress, leaving psychological and behavioral qualities of the employees untouched, which are also considered to be consistent sources of job stress. It is therefore, essential to categorize the potential sources of job stress primarily in two different sections i.e., personality characteristics and work setting variables.

There is also a physiological concept of stress. Hans Selye (1956)² in his General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) defines biological stress as non-specific bodily response to any job demand. He has described a comprehensive model through which it can be understood that how a stress free personality ultimately becomes a stressful one. The model suggests a three (3)-stages continuous development process that can also be called as physiological response mechanism. The first stage is called 'alarm action' which is an initial shock phase and reduces the resistance mechanism of the job occupant. The second phase is named as 'stage of resistance', which helps the incumbent to maximize the level of adoption and as a result the alarm reaction disappear. Finally, the 'stage of exhaustion' comes into force in which the adoption energy gets exhausted, the alarm reaction reappear (either in the same old form or in some other form). The organism then collapses and thus the incumbent start developing the very first sense of stress and strain.

It is clear that that the job stress phenomenon involves complicated interactions between person and environment. It is also true that time plays an important role in making a job incumbent feeling stressful. One's job may be a stressor agent but his/her reaction to that stressor may take place immediately in the work place or the very next day at his/her home or at any time or at any place in the future.

1.2. Origin of job stress.

Job stress is nothing new in the human society. Since time immemorial it has been with those people who are to accomplish some thing in a given frame of work design and of course in a given period of time. The 'given frame' and the 'given time' are the main causes of stress among the human being. Modern world is no exception; job stress is even more acute in the present day condition. The pace of life in the post 2nd World War has been at its peak. Excessive pressure for performance, different incentive schemes, and chaotic administrative structure in Government establishments are some of the pre-requisites for the generation of stress. The massive extent of consequences of both employees and the organizations made the subject popular in 1970s and since then researchers in the field of *Industrial and Organisational (I/O) psychology* continued their efforts to understand the subject '*job stress*' all in terms of its causes, consequences, and effective management of the same. The basic purpose of these research works were to make a comprehensive attempt to understand job stress and to frame a basic guideline to develop a control mechanism so as to reduce the same in such a level so that its toll be reduced to a minimum possible level.

Employees' locus of control has been recognized as a factor determines the degree of occupational stress experienced by the working people. Some people believe that they are masters of their on fate. Others see themselves as pawns of their fate, believing that what happens to them in their lives is due to luck or chance. The first type, those who believe that they themselves control their destinies, have been leveled **internals**, where as the later, who see their lives as being controlled by out side forces, have been called **externals**.³ A person's perception of the source of his fate is termed as locus of control.

A large number of researches comparing internals with externals have consistently shown that individuals who rate high in externality are less satisfied with their jobs, have higher absenteeism rates, and are more alienated from the

work setting, on their jobs than the internals. Why are externals more dissatisfied? The answer is probably because they perceive themselves as having little control over those organizational outcomes that are important to them. Internals, facing the same situation, attribute organizational outcomes to their actions. If the situation is unattractive, they believe that they have no one else to blame but him or herself. Also, the dissatisfied internals are more likely to be stressful than the externals. Almost any job condition can cause stress, depending upon an employee's reaction to it. For example, one employee will accept a new method of functioning and others will out and right reject the same.

Job stress as a dynamic condition emerges not only because of individual or personal factors but also due to organizational reasons. Employees working in a particular organization cannot anyway make themselves free from inherent stress proneness from which the organization is being suffered. Researchers have been trying to establish the fact that organization related facts are more contributory than the person related factors in developing stress among employees. In fact, the effects of organizational variables have a great impact on stress development but the extent of the same is not equal on every employee. Employees working under same working condition certainly may not have the same amount of stress rather they may have differential stress level. Different individual perception, different coping mechanism, and different personal characteristics may have a great bearing on the stress experienced by an individual.

In case of poorly defined jobs, people may have varied expectations from a job occupant's activities consequently; the focal employee may not have the idea of what to do with the particular job and cannot meet the expectation. Role conflict, Role ambiguity and other role-related variables do affect the employee's performance to a great extent. Work and job environment also have bearing on the performance too. Individualities matching with job related factors produce stressors for an employee. It is not necessary that same job environment will

create same type of stressors. On the other hand same stressors will not have same impact on every stressful employee. This study will however, stress its endeavor to identify various type of stressors whether job related or individuality related and will seriously attempt to recognize the affect of the same on the employees as well as on the organization.

Some jobs provide more stress than others. Jobs, which involve rotating tasks, shift work, machine paced tasks, routine and repetitive work, along with hazardous environments is associated with greater job stress. Workers who spent many hours in front of computer screens also report high level of stress. Evidence also indicates that the sources of stress differ by organizational hierarchy of the employees. Executive stress may arise from the pressure for short- term financial results or the fear of hostile take over attempt, corporate cutbacks etc. Supervisory stressors include the pressure for quality, customer service, numerous meetings, and responsibility of the work for others. Workers on the other hand are more likely to experience the stressors of low status, lack of perceived control, resource shortages, and the demand for a large volume of error free work.

Stress at work resulting from increasing complexities of work and its divergent demand, has become a prominent and pervading factor of the modern organizations. The researchers in the area of I/O psychology and management have used the term to denote employees' mental state aroused by a job situation or a combination of job situations perceived as presenting excessive and divergent demands. Some researchers have emphasized the role of job situation in their definition of job occupational stress. Caplan Cobb and French (1975).⁴ have accordingly defined occupational stress as "any characteristics of job environment which poses a threat to the individual". Cooper & Marshal (1976)⁵ have expressed that "by occupational stress is meant negative environmental factors or stressors associated with a particular job".

Stress shows its affect in various ways. For instance, an individual experiencing high level of stress may develop high blood pressure, irritability, difficulty in making regular decisions etc. Most of the researchers thus categorized consequences of job stress in three different sections like Physical consequences, Psychological consequences, and Behavioral consequences.

1.3. Statement of problem

In last two decades, few studies have been conducted to explore role stresses experienced by different professional groups in India such as bank managers (Sen, 1981⁶, Mukherjee. 1997⁷), executives of private and public sector (Khanna. 1985⁸, Pattanyak & Misra. 1997⁹ Srivastav. 1999¹⁰), computer professionals (Pestonjee & Singh. 1983¹¹, Singh. 1987¹²), private entrepreneurs (Gupta. 1999)¹³, Misra et al., 1997¹⁴) physicians (Pestonjee & Misra. 1999¹⁵), scientists (Roy. 1997¹⁶), middle level executives (Sharma, R.R. 2002¹⁷), air traffic controller (Misra, P.K. et al., 2003¹⁸) employees of electronic industry (Kang, S.L. 2004¹⁹). However, there are many other working groups, so far left untouched in this area of study.

Few particular areas of objective stress research in our country so far has not been received desired attention by the Indian researchers in spite of the fact that a large section of the Indian working population irrespective of private and public sector have been suffering from excessive occupational stress. A large section of potential workforce has been suffering from the symptoms of losing their ability and efficiency due to massive work place oriented stress. The traditional concept of job in India is rapidly changing to keep its pace with the changes in the economic pattern in all over world. The degrees of uncertainty in the jobs are increasing in a galloping rate. Extra pace for competition, rapid changes in the technology and more and more complex family environment are few other issues may be responsible for massive perceived job stress in Indian working classes. It would, hence, be a right attempt to study the causes,

consequences and remedies of stress of the employees of a Government owned organization like Indian Postal department.

While studies have been carried out abroad in this field, very limited research has been taken up in India. In fact few works have been taken in India but not a single such work has touched the problems of the Indian Postal employees who are vast in number, spread in all over the country with a massive functional network. In fact, the literature survey made for this study has not found any job stress related study for the postal employees of any country.

It is noticed that the working class of the Indian postal department can be a suitable choice for such research work. Their age old working set-up, old fashioned office building, distressed looking employees and the treatment provided by the employees to the potential customers are some of the early detected symptoms, which confirm the prima-face evidence of stressfulness of those employees. The initial interactions with the employees and with the active members of the functioning employees' union have made an initial impression that these particular groups of employees are stressful in real sense. At initial phase before going for any empirical analysis, following problems related to this Government run organization are observed.

- a) Each and every post office is understaffed and the workers are overloaded. Average age of the employees seems to be above forty and their average health seems to be not up to the mark.
- b) Employees in their working hours keep themselves engaged in the respective works. Most of them are so engaged with their work that they do not get any time for making any negotiation among themselves.
- c) Working instruments, office files, office equipments, working techniques, office printing and stationery etc. in most of the cases are

extremely backdated and no way capable of inspiring the working staff of the post offices.

- d) Except few head offices almost all the offices whether in the cities or in villages are shabby, dark and stuffed. Physical working environment almost everywhere seemed to be below the standard. The impression of negligence from the departmental authority is unambiguous.
- e) The discrimination between departmental and extra-departmental staff found to be prominent in terms of payment of salary, retirement benefits and also in terms of other rights usually a worker enjoys.
- f) Rural branch post offices run by the extra- departmental staff are seemed to be fully managed as private property. Presence of Government is hardly felt in these offices. Employees engaged in these offices are looking half-hearted, unenthusiastic and always suffer from a fear of loosing their job.
- g) City and urban-based post offices in most of the cases seem to have chaotic administration. Counter clerks, Mail vendors, Postmen, Group 'D' staff usually receive minimum support form the supervisory staff.
- h) Staff at supervisory level are observed to have helpless in every aspect of their working life. They are to negotiate with the employees' union while taking any local decision on the other hand remain answerable to the higher authority for job accomplishment.
- i) Employees irrespective of departmental or extra-departmental, clerical or supervisor seem to be extremely intolerant with their potential customers.
- j) A frequent trend of absenteeism among the employees has also been observed. Beside this, in many occasions it has been observed that employees in a busy table abruptly made him or her missing. Potential customers are kept waiting for a long period of time, unattended. Supervisors (working in the next table) hardly interfere to settle such

problems. An overall sense of scarcity of attachment with the organization is dominant among all types of staff.

- k) Most importantly, it has been observed that organization and its workers both the parties do not bother each other. Every activity in the offices takes place not because some one is instrumental to this rather it takes place because it should have happened.
- l) A lion share of the employees of postal department after all seems to not enjoying their job in the department nor does even the department feel comfortable with its employees.
- m) Frequent transfer is very common for the departmental staff from branch to branch and also from job to job. On the other hand there is no such transfer for the rural ED staff for years.
- n) The employees, specially the departmental staff are engaged in long work hour along with a 6 day long workweek.
- o) Counter staff are badly exposed to the out side office environment with very little support or protection from the supervisors' level.
- p) No viable mechanism to control job stress or any other employee related problem has been found in the post offices.

Careful analysis of various stress related research works have guided, that all this symptoms together support the view that the postal employees in this sub-continent may be highly stressful. The role related causes might be the hidden sources of such perceived stress of the employees. The poor physical as well as the mental health of the focal employees also proved that these might be the affect of acute and prolonged stress situation. Thus, with the view of measuring the perceived stress of the postal employees; to investigate the possible role related causes of such stressors; to investigate the possible physical, psychological and behavioral consequences of the affected employees; and the definite search of the proper way of management of such stressfulness, if any, for the employees as well as for the department, became main issues to be dealt with in this study.

1.4. Objectives of the study

The whole effort of the study intends to understand job or occupational stress in a meaningful way. Why job stress? What are the effects of such job stress on employees and also on the organization? And how to manage job stress to reduce it to a minimum level, are the basic and broad questions to be investigated in this study. The present study thus set following objectives:

- a) To measure the level of stress of all categories of sample postal employees.
- b) To measure various roles related stressors or factors responsible for job stress of the postal employees.
- c) To search the significance of different pay scale of the employees having engaged in the same sort of work, on the level of job stress.
- d) To search the impact of social security and certainty on the level of job stress score.
- e) To search the impact of various roles related stressors on the level of job stress.
- f) To find the impact of discrimination amongst two broad groups of employees in the postal department i.e. departmental staff and extra-departmental staff, on the level of job stress.
- g) To search the impact of the employee being male or female on the level of job stress.
- h) To find the effect of the style of functioning of the management on the level of job stress of the postal employees.
- i) To find out the level of satisfaction of the focal employees with their colleagues, customers, office environment, work design etc.
- j) To search the level of consequences in terms physical, psychological and behavioral changes of the focal employee.
- k) To relate the role related stressors with various human consequences and to find out the degree of such relationship.

- l) To search the relevance of the acute consequence like Burnout symptoms among the affected employees and to relate such acute symptom with role related stressors.
- m) To search comprehensive and cost effective technique for the employee as well as for the department to manage or to combat the perceived stress.
- n) To suggest some measures to the concerned parties to cope with the stress situation and to minimize the toll of the contemporary society.

1.5. Research Hypotheses

No empirical study accomplishes without examining appropriate test of hypothesis. Before such test it is important to develop usable hypothesis in the line of the objective of the study. It has now become obvious that the main objective of the study is to measure the extent of stressfulness of the Indian Postal employees along with the consequences of such stress on the employees. It is true that formulation of hypothesis is the crux of the entire study and the potential of such hypothesis certainly determine the quality of the outcome of this research work. Endeavor has been given so that hypotheses so formulated remain relevant with the body of the theory.

While framing these hypotheses few factors are taken into consideration. These include the fact that hypotheses must be unambiguous; they must have some empirical references and should have a comprehensive relation with the objective of the study. A hypothesis is testable if other deductions can be made from it which, in turn, can be confirmed or disprove by observation.²⁰

The major purpose of the study is to explore the stress situation of the Indian postal employees. Even a purely descriptive study could successfully accomplish that purpose and provide us the result that would then develop the empirical base, from which to generate a testable hypotheses later on. It is also

important to anticipate the verification of the problem. Zetterberg ²¹ has stated three criteria for the acceptance of a working hypothesis:

- i) The empirical data are found to be arranged in the manner predicted by the working hypothesis.
- ii) We have to disprove the null hypothesis with a certain probability.
- iii) We have to disapprove alternate hypothesis to the one tested.

Now, keeping all these rationales, following hypotheses have been developed in addition to the descriptive analysis of results. Eventually, all these hypotheses will be statistically tested for their acceptance and rejection:

Hypothesis-I: *All the Postal employees are excessively stressful.*

Rational for the hypothesis: The total number of departmental staff are being reduced day by day. Since 1984 no new posts have been created in the department and regular recruitment remains closed since then. Only one-third of the posts vacant due to retirement of existing staff, are filled up on very casual mode and remaining two-third posts are being abolished. Consequently, the existing departmental staff are overburdened with massive workload with lot of professional uncertainty. On the other hand ED staff are appointed on very poor salary structure and no other facilities and hence they are stressful and the extent of such stressfulness is extreme and prolonged for both categories employees.

Hypothesis-II: *Employees in postal department are categorized in departmental and extra-departmental staff. In few cases they are involved in same sort of work and responsibility but receive discriminated treatment from the authority especially in terms of the salary.*

Rational for the hypothesis: So far the crux of the problem of the Indian postal department is the discrimination of its own employees in two different categories i.e., departmental employees who are considered at par with other central

Government employees and the extra departmental employees who are more in number and offered a step mother like treatment by the department. These employees are not provided salary, retirement benefit, and other facilities at par with their departmental counterpart. If a comparative study is made between these two types of employees it is found that in few cases the nature and load of work is identical for them but facility wise they are highly discriminated.

Hypothesis-III: *Extra-departmental staffs are more stressful than their departmental counterpart.*

Rational for the hypothesis: Extra-departmental staff are low paid worker in the department with virtually no other service benefits. In most of the cases their workload and official responsibility are as good as departmental employees. The overall working environment in the post offices is not workers friendly the condition of the post offices wholly run by the ED staff are even poorer. Moreover, their fights against all this discrimination have all gone into vein. The situation all together does no way favour these ED staff and hence they are more stressful than their departmental counterpart.

Hypothesis-IV: *Female employees irrespective of categories are more stressful than their male counterpart.*

Rational for the hypothesis: Female employees of both the categories though less in number but engaged themselves otherwise with various family matter heavily except office job. Under Indian condition specially, women in every sense are preoccupied with massive family related workload. Their participation in office while working is also inevitable. Hence, with multiple engagement and responsibility they are supposed to be more stressful than their male counterpart.

Hypothesis-V: *Educational qualification maintains an inverse relation with ORS score*

Rational for the hypothesis: Education brings rationality and flexibility among the incumbent. More one has the exposure in the academic world more he/she will be balanced in his/her personal character. It is education that brings a mechanism for the incumbent to develop a self-control style to combat any negative situation. Hence, it is hypothesized that extent of educational degree reduces ORS impact.

Hypothesis-VI: *Scarcity of infrastructure resources is more acute for the ED staff than the departmental staff.*

Rational for the hypothesis: Out of total 1,56,000 post offices 1,26,000 offices are situated in rural area. And almost all of these offices are managed and run by ED staff wholly. The basic infrastructure including building, furniture, office equipment and other necessary items are not supplied sufficiently to these offices in the whole country. The crisis also exists in the rural based offices too but from the personal visit to various offices and with the verbal report from the staff it seems that the ED Staff are more neglected in this regard.

Hypothesis-VII: *There is a severe trend of going for strike between both classes of employees.*

Rational for the hypothesis: Employees of public sector enterprise in third world countries have developed a habit of calling strike. The trend is very much prominent in Indian postal department too. The mental inclines of the employee in favour of conducting strike is to be measured and tested about the trend in this hypothesis.

Hypothesis-VIII: *There is a trend amongst both classes of employees to opt for early retirement.*

Rational for the hypothesis: Due to reduction in the total employees for last few years, both classes of employees are simply overloaded with different works. It is further noticed that most of the employees are not happy with the treatment they

receive from the administration. It is therefore, predictable that the employees are not sufficiently confident about their future in their own organization and therefore desire for early retirement.

Hypothesis-IX: *The treatment of the postal employees with their customer is not satisfactory.*

Rational for the hypothesis: It has been a common experience of the common people that they do not get satisfactory treatment from the employees of postal department. Mistreatment of the postal employees with potential customer may lead to huge loss of the concerned offices. Moreover, the recent growth of the private courier service always offers attractive options to the potential customers. Under this situation an attempt has been taken to measure the extent of treatment of the employees with their customers and hypothesized the issue consequently.

Hypothesis-X: *The ED staff feel less attached with the organization in comparison to other categories of staff.*

Rational for the hypothesis: It is evident from the descriptive analysis that the staff groups belonging to Extra-departmental category are not treated well so far as providing facilities are concerned. They are low paid, their workload is not well defined, and they are not treated at par with their departmental counterpart in any of the aspect related to service except quantity as well as quality of work. All these make a sense that these groups of people may not feel so attached with the organization and hence it is hypothesized so for further empirical tests.

Hypothesis-XI: *The ED employees suffer from acute sense of low self-respect.*

Rational for the hypothesis: Due to overall negligence from the part of the administration for a prolonged period of time, the sense of self-respect of the ED Employees gone down. Especially, the ED employees working in the urban

offices side by side with their departmental colleagues feel a sense of estrangement in their work place. In the offices where both types of worker work together, the ED employees do not find any place to hide their low status from the office environment and thus gradually develop an acute sense of low self-respect among them.

Hypothesis-XII: *Postal employees are left with too much of achieving targets by the authority.*

Rational for the hypothesis: A slow and disguised process of downsizing is going on in the Indian postal department. Many activities have been made detached from the Postal department and the whole process has started long back in the year 1984. Moreover, many new activities (i.e., Mango post, Flower post, Tea post, Collecting Telephone bills, Electric bills etc.) are included in the department in the same period of time. Many new post offices took their birth at the same time and the total numbers of employees are being gone down in a galloping rate. It has become the common practice to distribute the available work among the existing workers with time bound schedule. The time pressure makes the employee to think they are kept in a situation of too much of achieving targets by the authority.

1.6. Research Methodology

Keeping the frame of the broad objectives of the study in mind the research methodology has been framed. First of all the objectives have been analyzed and a frame of quantified questionnaire came in to surface. The literature survey provided a broad guideline in this respect. The standard form of questions to quantify the stress level of the working employees has been found in the form of ORS scale first invented and administered by Pareek (1983c)²². The questionnaire so found, was decided to be used in this study due to several reasons favoring the present study objectives. [The in-detailed discussions in this respect will be made in the section separately made for the questionnaire]

Now, it is the time to create a sample size of the number of employees to be approached for the investigation. We know that samples can be either probability sample or non-probability samples.²³ Probability samples include various popular techniques like simple random sampling, stratified sampling etc. On the other hand non-probability sample includes deliberate sampling, judgment sampling etc.

All most in every research work related to social science, the help of judgment sampling is used in some stage of the study. In case of the present study the whole population (i.e., the total employees of the Indian Postal department is 5,80,000 and these employees are spread in all over the country in 1,56,000 post offices) cannot be measured at a time. For a researcher of the stature of the present researcher it would not have been feasible to take a countrywide sample for investigation. It was therefore, decided to take help of the judgment sample to select the sample from the West Bengal Circle only. Afterwards, the simple random sample technique was followed to select the post offices so that there could be equal probability for every office to be selected. It was perhaps the most laborious phase of the present study. The primary information was collected from every head post offices situated in the district head quarters. It is a matter of fact that these head offices were not fully computerized and therefore, the proper address of the Sub and Branch offices under these post offices are not equitably arranged. Only the Accounts offices attached to every head offices are in a position to provide the actual number of Post offices and staff working in the district. The Accounts office workers remain so busy with their work and their record keeping method is so very complex that getting any sort of information, which is not required on regular basis, is almost impossible to receive from them. Several visits were made in the district head post offices and in the end with the cooperation from the active members of the postal unions the researcher was able to collect the address of the offices.

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Except the district of South 24 Parganas, the researcher in person visited all the districts of West Bengal. Before making such visits to the post offices, a simple random sampling was done with the total number of post offices. In total 355 post offices were touched either by personal visit or through the members of the unions. The questionnaire was either sent to the concerned offices by the active union members or with the same the researchers met the employee concern. . At this point it must be mentioned that the members of various postal unions took part in the research work actively. Wherever the researcher made a visit, whether it is GPO in Kolkata or District head post offices or Sub-post offices in the urban areas or the Branch post offices in the remote village area, the response of the active union members were remarkable. In fact they were very please to know that at least at academic level their issues have been discussed with. Of course, in many occasions the researcher faced the unpleasant quarries like 'how the venture of the present study would improve their salary or any other service benefits?'

The target was to get the 1000(one thousand) responses form the sample employees in total. But only 614 responses can be managed from the sample offices, due to the reasons beyond the control of this researcher, which can be out lined as under

- a) An official letter of introduction at GPO or higher level could not be Obtained by the researcher at the time of his visit to the post offices.
- b) Respondents at higher and supervisory level and clerical staff had shown very skeptic attitude towards the researcher and in many cases denied their reply straight way.
- c) The most difficult task was to get responses from the female workers. Any question required a comment on the performance of the management and/or personal or family oriented questions made them very reluctant and often they refuse to make any response.

d) Higher officials in the post offices were cooperative in introducing the researcher with other employees but most of them had shown massive rigidity in replying questions when their turn came. Facts and figures about the offices working under them were also kept undisclosed when asked for more information.

However, all together 614 responses can be collected with a perpetual effort of 18 months, ending November 2005. Out of this, 294 responses were collected from the departmental staff and that of the number of the extra-departmental staff were as much as 320. The proportion of female response altogether was 16.93%. The proportion of the same for the departmental staff was 19.72% and that of the ED staff was 14.37%.

There was a specific target of number of employees from the sampled post offices. Both classes of employees were specifically categorized on the basis of their respective basic pay and job classifications. The sample has the following break-up:

Table:1.1
Number of respondents of Departmental Staff

Sl. No	Grades	Categ-ories	Initial Basic Pay	Number of Male	Number of Female	Total
1	Group-B	0	RS.7500 and above	33	1	34
2	Supervisor	1	Rs 6500 and above Rs. 4500 and above	57	9	66
3	Postal Assistant	2	Rs.4000 and above	39	38	77
4	Postman	3	Rs. 3200 and above Rs. 3050 and above	56	5	61
5	Group-D	4	Rs. 2550 and above	51	5	60
			TOTAL	236	58	294

Table:1.2
Number of respondents of Extra-Departmental Staff

Sl. No	Grades	Categ-ories	Initial Basic Pay	Number of Male	Number of Female	Total
1	EDSMPs	0	RS.2125 and above	65	4	69
2	EDDAs/ EDSVs	1	Rs.1740 and above	45	25	70
3	EDBPMs	2	Rs. 1600 and above	58	1	59
4	EDMC/ ED Packer	3	Rs. 1545 and above	46	16	62
5	EDBPMS(for less than 3 hours 45 minutes	4	Rs. 1260 and above	60	0	60
			TOTAL	274	46	320

The responses were first collected through the questionnaire specially designed for this purpose and then these collected figures were fed into the computer through SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) in the Window mode and the required analysis and tests are demonstrated.

1.6.1. The Questionnaire.

The questionnaire (Appendix-A) developed for the studies has gone through two pilot surveys. Altogether 107 (One hundred seven) questions were finally placed in the questionnaire. Two repeated pilot tests made the questionnaire flexible and sound in the reliability. The whole questionnaire was section wise divided into 7 (seven) different parts.

The first part is named as "Respondents' Profile" contains 15 different queries in relation to the respondents' personal data. The questions in this section includes whether the employee belongs to departmental or extra-departmental categories, whether Male or Female, name of the post, present basic pay etc. This information were deliberately designed in this section so as to establish the symptoms of stressfulness of the focal employees with several variables like male or female, basic pay, experience, number of training,

qualification of the focal person etc. It is well known fact to the I/O Psychologists that many of these factors are effective moderator of the human stressors. While selecting the questions of the "Respondents' Profile" several studies of the literature were consulted with. The experience of the pilot survey also came fruitful to include or even to exclude some of the elements of the questionnaire, considering the relative fit of the question to the subject.

The second part of the questionnaire is named as "Section-A", which consists of 13 (thirteen) questions altogether designed to reply in the form of Yes/No pattern. With several experiments, these questions were framed to judge the respondents' feelings about various conventions being practiced in the postal department. Whether they need more training, whether they favour performance appraisal, whether satisfied with the superior etc are some of the examples of the questions kept in this zone. The reply of the sample employees in this section would help to judge the rationality of the reaction of the employees in various problem situations.

The third zone of the questionnaire is consisted with only 3 (three) questions and leveled as "Section-B". These are specially designed questions to judge the reaction of the respondents in terms of the treatment of the department with its employees. The replies of these specially designed questions are also planned to use for descriptive analysis of some of the research hypotheses.

The fourth section, leveled as "Section-D" of the questionnaire is made in relation to the Psychological Problems/Consequences of the focal employees. Most of the researchers in this particular field used these same questions to investigate the Psychological consequences of the focal employees. The reply in this section was asked in the form of either 'often' or 'sometimes' or 'never'. The respondents were free to reply these questions on the basis of their self-assessed feelings.

Fifth and Sixth section of the questionnaire were framed to collect information in relation to the physical and behavioral consequences of the sample employees. These two sections are leveled as "Section-D" and "Section-E" respectively. Most of these questions are conventional in the 'stress' literature and are used here without making much improvisation to this. Questions in relation to the adjustment of the postal staff with their colleagues and customers were incorporated by the researchers, especially for this particular study for the measurement of specific questions of research hypotheses.

The seventh and the last section of the questionnaire is related with the measurement of Organisational Role Stress of the sample employees. This particular questionnaire was developed by Pareek (1983c) and used by several scholars in India in measuring the objective role stress of the employee. [Kedarnath (1988)²⁴ Ahmed et al. (1991)²⁵; Singh, A.P et al., (1997)²⁶; Misra, P.K. (2003)²⁷ et al., etc.]

1.6.1.1. ORS Scale.

This particular scale was first invented by Pareek (1983c)²⁸ and then administered by several researchers in the field of human stress measurement, the present study also endeavors to administer the same for the purpose of measuring the stressors of the sample employees.

Pareek (1983c) and later on Pestonjee (1999)²⁹ identified following ten (10) different situation variables (factors) on the basis of theoretical speculation and statistical analysis.

- i) Inter- Role Distance: Every working individual plays more than one role at a time. His role in work place may come into a conflict with family or social roles he or she is otherwise preoccupied with.
- ii) Role stagnation: This sort of stress is generated due to the gap of extreme involvement with an existing role and the new role that the

incumbent has to accept for the change in the organization. This peculiar phenomenon occurs especially when an individual enters new role/job after occupying a role for a long period of time.

- iii) **Role Expectation Conflict:** This is a kind of stress generated when a role occupant remains in dilemma about whom to please. There may be two or more than two persons interested in the outcomes of one's performance in the role and surprisingly, their expectation may differ.
- iv) **Role Erosion:** This is a feeling of stress when a role occupant feels that his/her job is performed by others due to indulgence of the authority. It may also surface when credit of performance is otherwise shifted from the actual doer to other one.
- v) **Role overload:** When an occupant feels that he/she is loaded with work, which is beyond his capacity to accomplish, this particular stress may occur. This overloading may be of three types; too much physical load, time constraints, and intellectual incapability to combat the very work.
- vi) **Role isolation:** This is a situational distress of role occupant where he/she feels that due to very nature of the job he/she remains isolated from other role occupant as well as from other's role. If the place of job is not conducive for interaction this sort of stress may occur among the employees where they may even feel that they are purposefully ignored in the organization.
- vii) **Personal Inadequacy:** this type of stress is very common among the newly appointed employees where due to lack of training and knowledge they feel that they are not capable of performing the task meant for him/her. It may even occur due to the change in the technology of function when existing working force may feel such stress, as they are not acquainted with the changed technology. Occupant of such stress may feel alienated over the time.

- viii) Self-Role Distance: This type of stress may occur when an incumbent perpetually feels that his likings do not match with the requirement of the role he occupied. Prolonged engagement with the stereotype work may be the source of such stress.
- ix) Role Ambiguity: This is a type of stress where the role occupant remains confused about the priority of his functioning. If authority fails to categorize the function of a role occupant without any ambiguity this type of stress becomes obvious.
- x) Resource Inadequacy: This is the type of stress when the role occupant feels that he/she is not provided with appropriate resources to challenge the requirements of the role he/she occupied at present. It may even occur due to late and casual direction from the end of supervisor.

According to Pareek, (1983c), the ORS scale, which constitutes ten variables, can be used to investigate the nature and dynamics of role stress in various organizations and to develop interventions for the use of individuals, groups and organization. ORS is certainly, one of the best instruments available today for measuring a wide variety of role stresses. It is a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disapprove" to "strongly approve", was used for each item of role stress variables. Every variable is associated with 5 different questions and the probable reply was asked from the respondents in five different options ranging from 0 (zero) to 4 (four) i.e., '0' assigned to a reply means 'I never feels this way'; '1' to a statement ' feels occasionally this way'; and '4' means 'feels very frequently or strongly feel this way'. Hence, the score of each role stress variable will range from (5 questions X highest score of each question i.e. 4 or lowest score of each question i.e. 0) 0 (zero) to 20 (twenty). Like wise, the total score of all these ten variables will range from (50 questions X 0 or 4) 0 (zero) to 200 (two hundred).

For this purpose the following degree scales will be followed as suggested by *Srivastav. (1999)*³⁰

- i) Respondents scoring less than 50% of the total Score ($4 \times 50=200$) i.e., Scoring below 99 are assumed to be low stressful or having no stress.
- ii) Respondents scoring more than 50% of the total Score ($4 \times 50=200$) i.e., 100 or more but below 140 are assumed to be moderately stressful.
- iii) Respondents scoring 70% or more of the total Score ($4 \times 50=200$) i.e., 140 and above are considered to be highly stressful.

All the ten variables are attached with 5 questions each and are placed into a gap of ten questions in the serial numbers of the questionnaire. For example, the questions of Role Overload are set in question numbers (5), (15), (25), (35), and in (45). All other questions in relation to other role variables are set in similar pattern.

Various statistical techniques have been used to quantify the level of job stress among the postal employees. All ten variables of ORS will be measured with the help of Arithmetic Mean (AM), Standard Deviation (SD) Coefficient of Variance (CV). Sections A,B, C, D and E will be measured through ratios, percentages, AM, SD etc. While making comparative study of different symptoms with ORS variables the help of Correlation of Coefficient will be taken for. For test of hypothesis 'z' test technique is planned to use and the rational for such selection will be explained in the fifth chapter where such tests will be done.

1.7. Collection of data.

Once the questionnaire has been formed, it has been taken to the sample employees for collection of reply. Initially a validation process has been followed for justification of the questions. Within 15 days of elementary investigation the questionnaire was rearranged once again keeping in view the primary reaction and assessment of the respondents. The questionnaire so revalidated was then

finally administered among the sample employees. While collecting the information the researcher felt that a sense of insecurity among the staff is extreme and any outside quarries are commonly looked upon as an attempt of jeopardize such security of the employee. They were in fact scared in disclosing any information about their office or work they are engaged with. Initially several attempts have been made to convince the employee about the very purpose of the collection of data. The attitude changes but still it does not suffice the requirement of the target. Female employees especially were not at all accessible. In many occasion the researcher is simply denied by them. Moreover, the female respondents, from whom the replies are gathered frequently asked about the justification of few question what they think not suitable for them.

On the other hand the post offices selected by simple random sampling are situated far away from each other. To reach the target offices in the rural area, sometimes I had to walk miles in the non-metal village road, for hours. It is also worth mentioning that on many occasions no single employee was found in such offices and even the villagers were not in a position to convey the whereabouts of the ED postal employee of the particular village post office. In addition to the data collected through personal interview, many other secondary sources were used for statistical feed back. These include, I) interview with the union leaders and their personal opinion about the present crisis of the department, ii) various office documents including the reports of various Commissions set up for settling different burning issues of employee relation, iii) the monthly news bulletin cum periodical of one of the leading postal unions named " Sangrami Dak". Iv) various government reports Internet copies of different news papers and periodicals

1.7. Plan of the study

The whole study is now comprehensively divided into seven different chapters as per the convenience of the objectives of the study. The arrangement

of chapter may otherwise be also possible but so to say that by looking at the pace of the development of the study, such arrangement of the chapters took following spontaneous shape.

The first chapter delves into the introduction of the research problem and analyzed the objective of the stress research for the employees engaged in an organization like Indian postal department. This chapter also encompasses the methodological issues and elaborates the basis of different methodological techniques adopted in the study. The chapter also discusses steps in developing the questionnaire for the study. Method of data collection and sources of many other secondary data were also spelt out in this chapter.

The second chapter is completely framed on survey of existing literature survey. In this chapter a review of existing literature and the studies already done in the field of human stress are also discussed. In addition, a review is also carried out of some of the important aspects, which fall under the purview of the study, such as human consequences of stress, burnout symptoms, socio psychological effects of human stress etc.

The third chapter deals with the present profile of the Indian postal employees. The historical backdrop is analyzed and considered here so as to understand the present scenario of the department. Mainly the employee related issues are given importance in this chapter. The structure of the employees, their job classification, their workload, their social status, their pay and other facilities etc. are also discussed in this section.

The fourth chapter delves into the search of organization related causes of human stress. Many interrelation of organisational stress with other employee related factors are also found out in this chapter. This chapter mainly manifests the fact that in what extent the employees are stressful due to various role factors.

The consequences of the stress among the postal employees are the matters described in the fifth chapter. The consequences here include all three sorts i.e., physical, psychological and behavioral consequences. All these perceived effects on human being have been measured and analyzed on the basis of self-report of the sample employees. Various coefficients of correlation have been also measured to understand the interrelationship between role variables and human consequences.

Chapter six in this study is designed to deal with different management options of the stressful employees as well as for the organization. In this chapter an attempt has been made to explore different options of management of stress of the affected employees.'

The seven or the last chapter includes concluding observations and major findings of the study. The limitations of the study, scope of further research in this field and few constructive suggestions are also planned to accommodate in this chapter.

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