Research Paper Commerce

Stress at Work: How Do Women Employees Cope

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ABSTRACT

Work stress is recognized worldwide as a major challenge to workers' health and the healthiness of their organizations. The problem of stress is inevitable and unavoidable. Stress, an integral part of the human existence, is said to have an immense influence over the lives of individuals and the organizations. Stress is defined as a situation where the organism's homeostasis is threatened or the organism perceives a situation as threatening. As individuals spend most of their time at work, the workplace has been conceived to be a potent contributor and influencer of stress. At the workplace, various roles are performed which have to be in synchronization with the roles at home and other places. The stress induced due to roles performed by individuals as employees at workplace, has been one of the most persuasive organizational stressors the outcomes of which have been found to be costly to the organization. Against this backdrop, the present study aims at examining the factors causing stress and the stress management techniques of the women in the public sector. The study is based on primary data. Primary data is collected from 150 women employees, who are employed in public sector in Guntur city of Andhra Pradesh. Simple random sampling method is used to select the sample. The study finds that entire sample respondents are found to be facing stress while performing their duties. Time pressure is found to be major cause for their stress. Most of the sample respondents are facing mental stress. High levels of stress are reported by more than half of the sample respondents. Headache is found to be major inconvenience faced by the sample respondents due to stress. There are other inconveniences as well like digestive problem, nervousness and high blood pressure. Sleeping more, setting goals daily and prioritizing the work, engaging in hobbies, engaging in physical exercises, seeking professional help, talking with friends and family members, and taking coffee, tea, etc. found to be stress coping strategies followed by majority of the sample respondents.

Keywords : stress, need for managing stress, causes for stress, kinds of stress, stress coping strategies

Introduction

Work stress is recognized worldwide as a major challenge to workers' health and the healthiness of their organizations. The problem of stress is inevitable and unavoidable. Stress, an integral part of the human existence, is said to have an immense influence over the lives of individuals and the organizations. Stress is defined as a situation where the organism's homeostasis is threatened or the organism perceives a situation as threatening. As individuals spend most of their time at work, the workplace has been conceived to be a potent contributor and influencer of stress. At the workplace, various roles are performed which have to be in synchronization with the roles at home and other places. The stress induced due to roles performed by individuals as employees at workplace, has been one of the most persuasive organizational stressors the outcomes of which have been found to be costly to the organization.

According to the World Health Organization stress, especially that relating to work, is the second most frequent health problem, impacting one third of employed people. The impact of stress on health can also be recognized from the fact that the prescription of drugs especially those which treat stress have been on the rise. Due to the dysfunctional aspects of stress, an individual is prone to increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, increased intention to leave the job, lack of loyalty and commitment to the organization. In this sense, not only the individual but organizational interests are also jeopardized by dysfunctional level of stress. It is a well known factor for low motivation and morale, decrease in performance, high turnover and sick - leave, accidents, low job satisfaction, low quality products and services, poor internal communication and conflicts, etc. which have an effect on overall organizational efficiency and effectiveness. It also affects customer orientation and has direct and indirect effects on job performance.

Women face with a choice between the two, tend to allow family responsibilities to take precedence over work obligation. The point to be considered here is whether there is any basic conflict between the role of a woman as a mother and wife and as that of a workingwoman and whether effective handling of one can be done only at the cost of the other. There is nothing in the way of women striking a proper balance between the conflicting demands and being able to discharge both the duties efficiently and effectively.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims at examining the factors causing stress and the stress management techniques of the women in the public sector. The study is based on primary data. Primary data is collected from 150 women employees, who are employed in public sector in Guntur city of Andhra Pradesh. Simple random sampling method is used to select the sample. Percentages are used to analyze the data.

Need for Stress Management

A healthy employee is a Productive Employee. The better the quality of the staff, the better able the staff will be in performing their duties. On account of this, the organizations are turning towards giving some attention to the health of their employees, not only physical but mental also, by undertaking the integration of the individual with the organization as their strategic activity. One can improve the ability to deal with stress if one reduces the stresses around, changes the life style, or recognizes the part played by his own personality or disposition to respond to stress, among other things. In that context, it is not only necessary to identify the hurdles, incapacities or demands in the roles but also to examine the key role played by various determinants in increasing the complexity and multidimensionality of the phenomenon.

Results and discussion

Profile of the sample respondents

The entire sample respondents are middle aged and are currently married. They are living in nuclear families. Educational qualifications of the sample respondents are given in Table – 1. It is revealed from the table that significant proportion of the sample respondents are graduates (56 per cent), while 30 per cent of the sample respondents are Post graduates. The study consists of around 11 per cent of the sample respondents, who are engineering graduates. The study also comprises of sample respondents, who had studied only upto intermediate (3.30 per cent).

Table – 1
Distribution of the sample respondents by literacy level

Literacy Level	No. of respondents	Percentage
Degree	84	56.00
Post graduation	45	30.00
B.Tech.	16	10.70
Intermediate	5	3.30
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Causes for stress

It is found from the field survey that entire sample respondents are facing stress at the work place. Sample respondents are asked to state the reasons for their stress. Distribution of the sample respondents by reasons for stress are presented in Table – 2. It is obvious from the table that time pressure is found to be the main reason for stress in the opinion of the majority of the sample respondents (54 per cent), while 18 per cent of the sample respondents reported that work overload is the cause for their stress. The data further shows that strict rules for availing leave is also the cause for the sample respondents (19.30 per cent). Sample respondents, who reported lack of autonomy to do work as the cause for stress, constitute around 9 per cent of the sample respondents.

Table – 2
Table showing reasons for stress among sample respondents

Reasons	No. of respondents	Percentage
Work overload	27	18.00
Time pressure	81	54.00
Strict rules for availing leave	29	19.30
Lack of autonomy to do work	13	8.70
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Kinds of stress

Sample respondents are asked to state the kinds of stress they are facing. Distribution of the sample respondents by kinds of stress is given in Table – 3. It is noticed from the table that huge percentage of the sample respondents are facing mental stress (52.70 per cent), while about 37 per cent of the sample respondents reported physical stress. Both mental and physical stresses are being faced by 10 per cent of the sample respondents.

Table – 3
Table showing kinds of stress among sample respondents

Kinds of stress	No. of respondents	Percentage
Mental	79	52.70
Physical	56	37.30
Both	15	10.00
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Level of stress

An attempt is made in the present study to know the level of stress. Distribution of the sample respondents by level of stress is given in Table – 4. The data shows that very high level of stress is being faced by 30 per cent of the sample respondents, whereas about 23 per cent of the sample respondents reported high stress. Moderate stress level is reported by one third of the sample respondents, while low level of stress is expressed by about 13 per cent of the sample respondents.

Table – 4
Table showing level of stress among sample respondents

Level of stress	No. of respondents	Percentage
Very high	45	30.00
High	35	23.30
Moderate	50	33.30
Low	20	13.30
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Kind of inconvenience due to stress

Sample respondents are asked to state the kind of inconvenience they are facing due to stress. Table – 5 furnishes the distribution of the sample respondents by kind of inconvenience faced by the sample respondents. It is delineated from the table that large chunk of the sample respondents are facing headache (48 per cent), while digestive problem is being faced by 30 per cent of the sample respondents. Nervousness due to stress is reported by about 15 per cent of the sample respondents, whereas sample respondents, who high blood pressure constitute, around 7 per cent of the sample respondents.

Table – 5
Table showing kind of inconvenience among sample respondents

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Digestive problem	45	30.00
Nervousness	23	15.30
Headache	72	48.00
High Blood pressure	10	6.70
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Stress management techniques followed by the sample respondents

There are various stress coping strategies. An attempt is made in the present study to know the stress coping strategies followed by the sample respondents. It is found from the study that sample respondents are adopting various coping strategies in order to relieve from the stress.

Submissive coping strategy

An attempt is made in the present study to know the submissive coping strategies followed by the sample respondents. Table – 6 shows the submissive coping strategies followed by the sample respondents. It is inferred from the table that 32 per cent of the sample respondents are sleeping more to relieve from the stress, while day dreaming is the strategy in the case of about 17 per cent of the sample respondents. Smoking and drinking alcohol are also reported by some of the sample respondents (16 per cent and 19.3 per cent respectively). Leaving the office is reported by about 15 per cent of the sample respondents.

Table – 6
Distribution of the sample respondents by sample respondents using submissive coping strategy

Coping strategy	No. of respondents	Percentage
Day dream	26	17.30
Smoke	24	16.00
Drink Alcohol	29	19.30
Sleep more	48	32.00
Leave the Office	23	15.30
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Functional coping strategy

An examination of the functional coping strategies of the sample respondents reveals that setting goals daily and prioritizing the work is found to be the major coping strategy in the case of large proportion of the sample respondents (52 per cent). Managing time is reported by 34 per cent of the sample respondents. Sample respondents, who reported preparing action plans for the work, comprises of about 14 per cent of the sample respondents (Table – 7).

Table – 7
Distribution of the sample respondents by sample respondents using functional coping strategy

Coping strategy	No. of respondents	Percentage
Set goals daily and prioritize the work	78	52.00
Prepare an action plan for the work	21	14.00
Manage time	51	34.00
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Diversion coping strategy

As regards diversion coping strategies followed by the sample respondents, it is evident from the study that diversion coping strategies include entertainment (30 per cent), engaging in hobbies (38 per cent) and internet browsing (32 per cent) (Table – 8).

Table – 8
Distribution of the sample respondents by sample respondents using diversion coping strategy

Coping strategy	No. of respondents	Percentage
Entertainment sources	45	30.00
Engage in hobbies	57	38.00
Browse internet	48	32.00
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Relaxation coping strategy

A perusal of relaxation coping strategies of the sample respondents reveals that majority of the sample respondents are engaging in physical exercises (50.70 per cent). The data further shows that indulging in meditation or yoga strategy is found to be followed by 34 per cent of the sample respondents. No relaxation coping strategy is reported by about 15 per cent of the sample respondents (Table – 9).

Table – 9
Distribution of the sample respondents by sample respondents using relaxation coping strategy

Coping strategy	No. of respondents	Percentage
Indulge in meditation or yoga	51	34.00
Engage in physical exercises	76	50.70
No strategy	23	15.30
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Third party support coping strategy

Regarding third party support coping strategies of the sample respondents, it is seen from the Table – 10 that seeking professional help is the strategy followed by majority of the sample respondents (45.30 per cent). Further, it is observed from the table that delegating responsibility instead of carrying it alone is the strategy followed by around 27 per cent of the sample respondents. Planned break from work is reported by around 21 per cent of the sample respondents. No third party support coping strategy is reported by about 7 per cent of the sample respondents.

Table – 10
Distribution of the sample respondents by sample respondents using third party support coping strategy

Coping strategy	No. of respondents	Percentage
Seek professional help	68	45.30
Delegate responsibility instead of carrying it alone	40	26.70
Planned break from work	31	20.70
No strategy	11	7.30
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Cognitive restructuring coping strategy

An analysis of cognitive restructuring coping strategies of the sample respondents shows that talking with friends/family members is found to be strategy followed by most of the sample respondents (57.30 per cent). Sample respondents, who reported trying to look at things differently as the strategy, consists of 18 per cent of the sample respondents. On the contrary, around 25 per cent of the sample respondents reported no cognitive restructuring coping strategy (Table – 11).

Table – 11
Distribution of the sample respondents by sample respondents using cognitive restructuring coping strategy

Coping strategy	No. of respondents	Percentage
Try to look at things differently	27	18.00
Talk with friends/ family members	86	57.30
No strategy	37	24.70
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Transitory reinforcement coping strategy

As far as transitory reinforcement coping strategy is concerned, it is found from the study that taking coffee, tea, etc. is found to be major transitory reinforcement coping strategy in the case of 62 per cent of the sample respondents. On the other hand, about 23 per cent of the sample respondents reported leaving the tension at work as the strategy. By contrast, around 15 per cent of the sample respondents reported no transitory reinforcement coping strategy.

Table – 12
Distribution of the sample respondents by sample respondents using transitory reinforcement coping strategy

Coping strategy	No. of respondents	Percentage
Take coffee, tea, etc.	93	62.00
Leave the tension at work	35	23.30
No strategy	22	14.70
Total	150	100.00

Source: Field Survey

Conclusion

The study finds that entire sample respondents are found to be facing stress while performing their duties. Time pressure is found to be major cause for their stress. Most of the sample respondents are facing mental stress. High levels of stress are reported by more than half of the sample respondents. Headache is found to be major inconvenience faced by the sample respondents due to stress. There are other inconveniences as well like digestive problem, nervousness and high blood pressure. Sleeping more, setting goals daily and prioritizing the work, engaging in hobbies, engaging in physical exercises, seeking professional help, talking with friends and family members, and taking coffee, tea, etc. found to be stress coping strategies followed by majority of the sample respondents.

It is suggested that employees must give importance to time management techniques there by they can complete their work within the specified time. Many tasks can be delegated to subordinates without losing effectiveness so that we can reduce the overload of work. Adopt the work to home transition strategy. It means instead of carrying the pressures of the work to home, the suggestion is to start the unwinding process during the work day and enter the home in a relaxed and peaceful mind.

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