ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Management

A STUDY ON THE ORGANISATIONAL STRESS LEVEL AMONG WOMEN EMPLOYEES OF IT INDUSTRIES IN CHENNAI

KEY WORDS: Stress

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ABSTRACT

Stress is defined as an upset in the body's balance due to physical, mental or emotional stimuli. Stress manifests itself in different ways including fatigue, chronic headaches, irritabilities, heart diseases and low self-esteem. Such adverse reactions are seen to contribute to mental and physical illness and several acts and regulations place a duty of care on employees to protect their employees. Jobs in the software field are characterized by long working period, minimum social interaction, night shift, Job insecurity, up gradation of new technology, time bounded projects, work environment, and continuous visual focusing the monitors which leads them to occupational stress. In recent times, working women not only acted as a home maker but also as a professional and contribute 46% of total workforce in India. As per socio cultural environment in India, women also expected to perform social responsibilities of home makers. Thus, working women across the world, specifically in India exposed with stressors from socio cultural environment and work environment. This paper deals with the impact of stress among women especially in IT industries.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The term "stress" is borrowed from the discipline of physics. Stress actually means pressure. It is inner pressure caused by three set of factors as mentioned below:

a) Endogenous
b) Exogenous and
c) Interaction of endogenous and exogenous factors

Endogenous means internal (endo means inter; genous means origin or genesis) or origination from within; exogenous means external (exo means outside) or originating from outside. The third set of factors would emerge when the internal and external factors interact with each other.

Stress can be defined in general term as people feel pressures in their own life. The stress due to work load can be defined as reluctance to come to work and a feeling of constant pressure associated with general physiological, psychological and behavioral stress symptoms.

Recent dictionary definitions associate the word, Stress with disease. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary (2007) describes stress as, "a condition or adverse circumstances that disturbs, or is likely to disturb, the normal physiological or psychological functioning of an individual". Most recently, work stress has been operationally defined by the U.K.Health and safety Executive as, "The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them".

1.2 ABOUT IT INDUSTRY

The sunshine sector of the Indian Economy - the Information Technology (IT) sector has been beneficial to the country in many aspects. It has not only helped India gain a prominent place in the global business scenario, but also has provided enormous employment opportunities with international exposure to the youth of India. It has been giving rich pay, fetching enormous foreign exchange and above all redefining the concept of work. However, not everything is smooth sailing for these workers. Job stress is a growing concern for this genre of employees

Now-a-days the number of Information Technology Companies (IT Cos) has increased tremendously. Due to the increasing number of IT Companies, the employees are facing pressure heavily from the management. This may cause the employees of IT companies to face heavy stress and therefore it affects their satisfaction and even their physical and mental health.

At present work environment has become more stressful because of diverse role expectations, cut throat competition, globalization and technological innovation. Such changes have created several complications on both the domestic and professional fronts for the employees. It is because of these problems that a number of organizations have been organizing several programmes for helping their employees get rid of their stress.

Managed efficiently, stress can enhance motivation and effort, thus contributing to professional growth and development.

1.3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Heaney et al. (1993)[1] revealed that those employees who were involved in the stress project reported more frequent participation in decision-making, were more likely to perceive management and supervisors as soliciting and adopting employee ideas, and were less depressed than those employees who did not highly involve in the participation action in stress project.
2. Lim and Hian (1999)[2] conducted a study to identify key factors at the work place which generate stress among information personnel in Singapore. Lack of career development, work overload, risk-taking and decision-making, and employee morale and organisational culture were identified as broad categories of stressors.
3. Aditya and Sen (1993)[3] mentioned that in the information technology field, the social support system among the employees includes the support from their next superiors, management, friends and relatives, spouse and other related persons in the society.
4. Hossain (1997)[4] concluded that the occupational stress was one of the important predictors of job performance. Stress could be either helpful or harmful to job performance, depending upon its degree. Anxiety, irritation, depression and annoyance in combination with unpleasant emotional experience of work were considered as occupational stress.

1. Catherine A. Heaney, Barbara A. Israel, Susan J. Schurman, Elizabeth A. Baker, James S. House and Margrit (1993), "Industrial Relations, Worksite, Stress Reduction and Employee Well - Being: A Participatory Action Research Investigation", Journal of Organisational Behaviour, 14 (1), pp. 495 - 510.
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3. Aditya, S. M and A. K. Sen (1993), "Executives Under Stress: A Comparison Between Men and Women", Journal of Indian Academy of Applied Psychology, 4 (1), pp. 102 - 115.
4. Hossain M. M (1997), "Some Correlates of Performance in Manufacturing Industries", Journal of Behavioural Sciences, 8 (1), pp. 35 - 41.
5. James (1999)[5] found that the organizational change is the most important factor leading to stress in the IT field.

Implementing new information technology in work environment exposes employees to change. Besides having to adapt to new system, the IT implementation is often a part of wider business process re-engineering. When change is expected anxiety / stress levels go up.

6. Le Blanc et al. (2000)[6] mentioned the important job stressors. Organizational characteristics like company size, hierarchical structure and job description can lead to stressors, such as role conflict or role overload. These stressors may lead to stress reactions or strains. Finally, can lead to physical illness, moderators like enduring properties of the individual's worker and interpersonal relationships can reduce or increase the stress reactions.

7. Minter (2003)[7] found that work-related stress affected 40 million employees in the European Union, 28 per cent of the workforce. The European Union officials estimated the annual bill for job stress was $ 20 billion. Some 50 to 60 per cent of absenteeism had been tied to work related stress.

8. Geeta Seshu (2003)[8] found that the youngsters working at call centres were increasingly seeking help for work-related stress, irregular sleeping hours, unhealthy food habits and chronic fatigue.

5. James, K (1999), "Re Thinking Organizational Stress: The Transition to the New Employment Age", Journal of Managerial psychology, 14 (7 & 8), pp. 545 - 577.
6. Le Blanc, P, De Jorge, J. Schaufeli, W (2000), "Job Stress and Health". In Chronicle N. (ed.) Introduction to Work and Organizational Psychology – A European Perspective Blackwell Publishing Limited.
7. Minter (2003), Easing the Stress: Will Employees Heed the Doctor's Advice and Stop Pushing Employees So Hard, Occupational Hazards.
8. Geeta Seshu (2003), "Stress Amidst Sunshine", The Hindu, Business Line, June, 8.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY
1. To study the social, emotional and physical problems faced by IT women employees.
2. To study the impact of variables contributing stress among IT women employees.
3. To measure the occupational stress level of the women employees in IT industry.
4. To analyze the methods adopted by companies to relieve from stress and to maintain a stress free environment.
5. To suggest methods for reducing the stress among women IT employees.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT
• The questionnaire has been constructed based upon the data requirements of the study.
• A total of 25 questions have been framed based on the variables of the study.
• For the conveniences of the employees, all the questions are made up the closed ended objective type format.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE
• The total sample size selected for the present study is antifamily assigned as 0.01 per cent to the total initially. At this stage, the simple random sampling has been followed to distribute the sample size. The IT companies and the category of women employees were treated as strata for the present study. The tools have been selected on the basis of the nature of scale of data and the relevance of its application. The tools are Percentage analysis, Weighted Average, Chi Square Test and Factor Analysis.

TABLE SHOWING THE OPINION OF RESPONDENTS ABOUT THE STRESS LEVEL CAUSED IN IT INDUSTRY

OPINIONS	NO. OF. RESPONDENTS					TOTAL	MEAN SCORE	RANK
	SD	D	N	A	SA			
The overall infrastructure provided by the organization is satisfying	100	68	54	24	8	254	5.39	V
Concern is shown for my health and safety at work place	95	72	45	28	9	249	5.32	VIII
My shift timings are flexible	50	68	66	32	10	226	5.01	X
I experience harassment on the basis of gender in the organization	70	64	57	30	11	232	5.09	IX
I think my performance is evaluated fairly	75	84	48	26	10	243	5.24	VII
There is an opportunity of Career growth at my industry	100	72	51	24	8	255	5.40	IV
My job gives me professional growth and advancement in future	100	84	57	16	7	264	5.52	II
The industry awards and recognizes my skill at right time	115	64	42	26	9	256	5.41	III
There is possibility to perform multi-tasks in my department	55	52	36	46	16	205	2.73	XII
I know what is expected of me during my job/work done	125	60	30	24	13	252	5.36	VI
My Job/responsibility is clearly described	120	80	39	20	8	267	5.56	I

TABLE SHOWING THE FACTOR ANALYTICAL STRUCTURE

S no	Factors	Statements	Factor loadings
1	FACTOR I	I know what is expected of me during my job/work done	.942
		My Job/responsibility is clearly described	.899
		There is possibility to perform multi-tasks in my department	.872
		I am encouraged to develop new & more efficient ways to do my work	.826
		The industry awards and recognizes my skill at right time	.725
2	FACTOR II	I am satisfied with the working hours and it fits my private life	.916
		I feel that I am able to balance my work and life	.904
		I experience excessive work pressure.	.753
		I experience harassment on the basis of gender in the organization	.752
3	FACTOR III	My shift timings are flexible	.910
		Concern is shown for my health and safety at work place	.882
		The overall infrastructure provided by the organization is satisfying	.637
4	FACTOR IV	There is an opportunity of Career growth at my industry	.800
		My job gives me professional growth and advancement in future	.729
5	FACTOR V	My present salary is appropriate to the work I do	.848
		The salary package offered by this industry meets my needs	.627
		If I feel underpaid, I can discuss my feelings with my supervisor/manager	.523
6	FACTOR VI	I very often feel that I am being neglected when I am in the team	.878
		My relationship with colleagues and peers is smooth and cordial	.858
7	FACTOR VII	The pay raises at my organization are satisfactory	.749
		I work for long hours or overtime and even on holidays	.715
8	FACTOR VIII	Employees in my team cooperate with each other to get the job done	.885
		Individual differences are respected [Age, gender, education, caste]	.514
9.	FACTOR IX	I think my performance is evaluated fairly	.876

INFERENCE:

• Among the high loaded factor statements the factor that I know what is expected for me during my job/work done has got the highest load. It is interpreted that 94.2 percent of the respondents are felt that they have well known what is expected during their job or work done by them.

• Among the high loaded factor statements the factor that I am satisfied with the working hours and it fits my private life got the highest load. It is interpreted that 91.6per cent of the respondents are satisfied in working hours and it fits their private life.

• Among the high loaded factor statements the factor that My shift timings are flexible got the highest load. It is interpreted that 91 per cent of the respondents are influenced by flexible shifting time.

• Among the high loaded factor statements the factor that There is an opportunity of Career growth at my industry got the highest load. It is interpreted that 80 per cent of the respondents are influenced by an opportunity of career growth at their industry.

• Among the high loaded factor statements the factor that My present salary is appropriate to the work I do got the highest load. It is interpreted that 84.8 per cent of the respondents are opined present salary is appropriate to the work they do.

• Among the high loaded factor statements the factor that I very often feel that I am being neglected when I am in the team got the highest load. It is interpreted that 87.8 per cent of the respondents are felt that they are neglected when they are in a team.

• Among the high loaded factor statements the factor that The pay raises at my organization are satisfactory got the highest load. It is interpreted that 74.9 per cent of the respondents are influenced by the pay raises at their organization

• Among the high loaded factor statements the factor that Employees in my team cooperate with each other to get the job done got the highest load. It is interpreted that 88.5 per cent of the respondents are influenced by cooperation in their team employees.

• Among the high loaded factor statements the factor that I think my performance is evaluated fairly got the highest load. It is interpreted that 87.6 per cent of the respondents are influenced by performance is evaluated fairly.

SUGGESTIONS:

Following are some of the recommendations, which the IT industry can take to provide a stress-free environment for its employees:

1. The main objective of the study is to examine the factors at workplace which generate stress among the IT professionals. It is found that almost all the factors taken for the study emerges as potential sources of stress. But the variables "Salary, Role clarity and Workload" are considered the major sources of stress. For that the following suggestions were made.

a. To reduce the work load, the role slimming and role adjustment process should be resorted to.

b. Organization should offer some psychology courses or counseling courses which can relish work related stress. These training classes may enhance the IT professionals' communication skills. To have better relationship with others, the companies may organize entertainment tours and monthly dinners. Organization can urge the IT professionals to interact with each other frequently. For example, to form some learning groups or entertainment clubs. Better interaction can enhance the degree of satisfaction of colleague relationship.

c. The reasons for job dissatisfaction may be many. One may be salary. Now due to economic recession the salary of the IT professionals is less comparing their competencies. Hence, the organization can design better salary base to retain the good IT professionals. Since, the IT career is very knowledge-intensive, it is fairly reasonable to pay for the skills, knowledge and competencies. Hence, competence based pay system should be adopted.

2. The IT professionals should be encouraged to take a vocation after completing a difficult task.

3. To help the IT professionals' progress in their career and development professionally, organization can provide development programmers and intensive training to enhance the skills and ability of these individuals.

4. Findings of the study suggest that the gender of the IT professionals reported significant relationship on the following occupational stress factors 'Workload', 'Salary', 'Relationship with team members', 'Physical working environment', 'Awards and recognition'. To assist the IT professionals to cope with such demands, organizations need to focus on building a conducive and supportive climate, particularly the support of an immediate supervisor as antidote for stress. Having a mentor to turn to in times of need and who can provide them with feedback and advise may increase the confidence of the IT professionals and help them deal with stress better.

CONCLUSION

The present study reveals that the IT professionals of Chennai subjectively experienced stress. The variables of stress are like workload, salary, and relationship with the superior, physical working environment, awards and recognition and role clarity. The IT professionals in Chennai experience considerable level of stress and depression. In the study, a number of suggestions are made. If the suggestions are carried out this would result in the improvement of performance, physical and psychological health and family life of the professionals. The professionals should be convinced by the organization to accept the fact that stress is an inevitable part of their lives and they can most conveniently manage it at their cognitive and behavioral levels by themselves. This would also help not only the professionals but also the managers to improve the productivity ratio. Safeguarding the mental health of the professionals is the basis for the peaceful nation. The professionals' peace paves peacefulness in the family, then the whole community and ultimately the whole nation.

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