

Stress management and coping techniques among women employees in IT sector: A Study in Chennai City

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Abstract

Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances. Stress happens when one feels that he can't cope with pressure and this pressure comes in many shapes and forms and triggers physiological response. And it creates perceived threats to one's survival. Some most common causes of stress are survival stress, internal stress, environmental stress, and fatigue and overwork. Work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope. Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues, as well as little control over work processes. There is often confusion between pressure or challenge and stress and sometimes it is used to excuse bad management practice. In modern competitive era, pressure at work is unavoidable Information Technology (IT) sector is one of the major employee generation industry in the global environment where both men and women are taking part. In this sector women made their way into the corporate workforce, but without priority of full development of their talents and rise for leadership positions due to stress. This paper is based on findings from research studies on Indian Information Technology Industry. It provides an overview of the challenges and stress observed by women who are working in IT sector organizations in Chennai city.

Keywords: Stress management, coping techniques IT sector,

Introduction

Stress is a wide phenomenon as it seems to have universal spread. Stress exists in human beings, animals and even in metals. Stress is also related with providing quality services to human beings depend upon their stress levels. However, this study is about women stress with special focus on the work stress in Information Technology sector. Many people think they understand stress, but in reality stress is complex and often misunderstood. Our Information Technology industry has a name for it 'Burn out stress syndrome', which is seen very commonly among women working in IT sector. Technological and regulatory changes in the IT sector in India created a sharp and fairly sudden increase in the demand for female workers, Therefore stress among women employees in Information Technology industry is a contemporary issue to discuss and to hit upon on elucidation of this problem.

Stress

Stress is a psychological and corporeal response of the body that occurs whenever we must acclimatize to altering circumstances, whether those conditions are real or perceived, positive or negative, although everyone has stress in their lives, people respond to stress in different ways. Some people seem to be sternly exaggerated while others seem calm, cool, and collected all the time. Stress is an unbearable state of emotional and physiological stimulation that people experience in situations that they recognize as dangerous or threatening to their wellbeing. Stress is a common experience. We may feel stress when we are very busy, have important deadlines to meet, or have too little to finish all our tasks. Often people are facing experience stress because lot of problems Occurred work place and social relationships. Stress can have both positive and negative effects. Stress is a threat. It signals danger and prepares us to take defensive action. Fear of things that pose realistic threats motivates us to deal with them or avoid them. Stress is an inevitable concomitant of organizational life. It source is an organization task or role related. Stress affects the employee's performance that indirectly affects the organization survival because if employees reduce their work efficiency and can't work best for their organization performance and if also affects the psychological health of the working women

employees. As far as stress is concerned, there is no universal definition of stress. Interestingly, most of the mechanical devices/structures are tested for stress levels in laboratories and manufacturing places for their prolonged life and efficient working. Both physical and psychological stressors have a tremendous impact on not only the employees' health, but also the organization's wealth. Stress has become a major concern of the modern times as it can cause harm to employee's health and performance. However the present paper encloses the human stress, especially among women in Information Technology industry.

Status of women in the IT sector in India

In the contemporary world, women no longer lag behind in terms of career. It has been noticed that Information Technology is one of the industry, which has witnessed high growth for women and helped them more. However, even today women are expected to do multi-tasking. One can say that 'Nature has given women too much power, the law gives them too little' as there is no separate rules (except in case of maternity phase, that to some extent only) in support of women to fill the gap during their innate responsibilities. Earlier The Factories Act, 1948, under Section 66, banned working of women in night shifts but later The High Court of Mumbai in its judgment dated 10th June 1999 passed an interim order allowing deployment of women in Santa Cruz Electronic in the nightshift. The Factories (Amendment) Bill, was introduced by on August 2005, which envisage that the employer ensures occupational safety and adequate protections to the women employed. The owner of the factory has to ensure, equal opportunity for women workers, adequate protection to their dignity, honor and safety and their transportation from factory to the nearest point of their residence. Reports says that Information Technology industry prefer women, due to more pleasant voice and demeanor when interacting with customers. Thus, technological and regulatory changes in the Information Technology sector in India created a fairly sudden increase in the demand for female workers.

Factors which leads to stress

More work load more stress: Excessive amounts of work and unrealistic deadlines making people feel rushed, under pressure and overwhelmed. A high workload is when the number of responsibilities one has pushes the boundaries of what can realistically be done in a given role.

Lack of self-confidence leads to stress: A low self-esteem can reduce the quality of a person's life in many different ways, including: Negative feelings – the constant self-criticism can lead to persistent feelings of sadness, depression, anxiety, anger, shame or guilt.

Inability to meet financial obligation leads to stress: Financial distress is a condition in which a company or individual cannot generate sufficient revenues or income, making it unable to meet or pay its financial obligations. Financially beaten down by money worries can adversely impact your sleep, self-esteem and energy levels.

More working time leads to stress: The mismatch between the individual and workplace such as terrible environment and overtime working are risk factors for occupational stress. Some studies have shown that long working hours will increase the risk of the job stress response. Long work hours may increase the risk of injuries and accidents and can contribute to poor health and worker fatigue. Long work hours can results in increased levels of stress.

Job insecurity leads to stress: Job insecurity is a major work-related stressor, which affects a growing number of workers. Exposure to job insecurity has been linked to a number of negative health outcomes, particularly mental health.

Common Signs and Symptoms of Stress

- Fatigue, headaches, rapid heartbeat and worsening of pre-existing conditions.
- Feelings of sadness, anxiety, anger and irritability.
- Confusion, forgetfulness and difficulty in concentrating or making decisions.
- Not acting like yourself, experiencing restlessness, being argumentative and experiencing changes in eating.

Review of literature

Manju Singh and P. N. Mishra (2012) - A Study of Work Stress and Coping Strategies among Women Employees in Information Technology Industry, Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology. This study examines the sources of work stress among women employees in the IT industry in India and the coping strategies that they use. The study found that factors such as work overload, role conflict, and job insecurity were significant sources of work stress among women employees, and that coping strategies such as seeking social support, relaxation techniques, and time management were effective in reducing work stress.

Madhuri Dubey and Ritu Singh (2013) - Women in IT: The Role of Social Support in Managing Stress, Global Journal of Human Resource Management. This study examines the role of social support in managing stress among women employees in the IT industry in India. The study found that social support from family, friends, and colleagues was a significant factor in reducing stress among women employees, and that social support can be an effective coping strategy for managing stress.

G. Muthuvel and R. M. J. Dhivya (2014) - Stress and Coping Strategies among Women IT Professionals: An Empirical Study. This study examines the sources of stress among women IT professionals in India and the coping strategies that they use. The study found that factors such as work overload, interpersonal conflicts, and role ambiguity were significant sources of stress among women employees, and that coping strategies such as seeking social support, problem-solving, and self-control were effective in reducing stress.

Objective of the study

- To examine levels of stress among women executives in IT companies in Chennai City.
- To find out the coping techniques adopted by women executives in information technology sector with reference to Chennai.

Methodology

In order to determine the stress coping techniques used by women employees in the IT sector in Chennai city. The researcher randomly selected 300 women employees from the IT companies by using the likart rating scale and the response details towards their stress at different work and environmental conditions and their coping techniques adopted by women executives are shown in the tables below.

Analysis of the Data

The frequency of stress level of women executives was analysed and the results are presented in Table 1. The results indicated that about 56.00 per cent are having medium level of stress followed by low level (35.60) and high level (7.70 per cent) of stress. The frequency distribution of stress levels of the women employees is graphically presented in figure 1.

Table-1: Frequency Distribution of Stress Levels of Women Executives

S.No	Frequency	Percent	F-Value	Sig
High	23	7.7	14.584	0.02
Medium	170	56.7		
Low	107	35.6		
Total	300	100		

The F-value of ANOVA test is 14.584 and it is statistically significant at five per cent level of significance indicating that there is a significant difference in stress levels among the women executives.

The coping techniques adopted by women executives were analysed and the results are presented in Table-2, From the table, it is apparent that about 34.00 per cent of women executives are improving health related facilities followed by interrelationship among individuals to build positive relationship (29.67 per

cent) and making annual holidays compulsory (21.67 per cent). Besides, sharing information and feedback and smoothen “home life” are also adopted by women executives.

Table- 2 : Coping Techniques Adopted by women Executives

S.No	Coping Techniques	Number of Women Executives	%	F - value	Sig
1	Smoothen “home life”	16	5.33	18.968	0.03
2	Sharing information and feedback	28	9.33		
3	Interrelationship among individuals to build positive relationship	89	29.67		
4	Improving health related facilities	102	34.00		
5	Making annual holidays compulsory	65	21.67		
	Total	300	100.00		

The F-value of ANOVA test is 18.968 and it is statistically significant at five per cent level of significance indicating that there is a significant difference in coping techniques adopted by the women executives.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress management refers to wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person’s level of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress. The management of stress has become the most important skill for the corporate era. There is no single solution for stress management but it is a step wise process which incorporates so many interrelated activities

Stress Management Techniques

- . Encourage Open Communication.
- Offer Mental and Physical Health Benefits.
- Bring in Meditation Classes.
- Offer Paid Time Off.
- Encourage Employees to Take Breaks.
- Take the Team Out on Company Offsite.
- Bring Some Diversions into the Office.
- Consider Flexible Work Schedules.

Discussion

The researcher concludes that there are various stressors among women employees in IT sector units such as poor working conditions relating work shifts, work overload, lack of participation in decision making, in appropriate leadership style, lack of social support, transfer, poor working relationship and technological changes in the organization. Excessive stress may result in bodily disturbances like peptic ulcers, migraine, headache; fever etc., High level of stress may affect self-confidence, lower self-esteem, lack in concentration and reduce job satisfaction. By testing the hypothesis, the researcher concludes that high level of stress is experienced by women employees due to factures like role ambiguity, role overload, lack of supervisory support, Technological changes.

Conclusion

The focus on women by the IT sector is an acknowledgement of their growing role in India’s economy. Analysts state that there is a direct correlation between the employment of women and the economic wellbeing of a nation. IT companies must further refine their policies and processes to strongly influence the participation of women in key leading projects and must identify procedures that can be restructured to encourage participation of women in organizational decision making activities. Companies have to understand the requirement of managing stress among women to make the environment conducive which can retain skilled talented women. Management must provide continuous learning, mentoring, coaching, counseling, opportunities for self-development, time management to handle their responsibility at home along with office to encourage them to take higher responsibilities of onsite

projects. Information Technology companies need to roll out today to give incentives to women workers and make the industry, as a whole an attractive and preferred carrier destination for them.

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