A Study on Occupational Stress, Health Problems and their Outcome of Selected Organizations It Professionals in Chennai

Shanmugavadivu KV[*1] , **Kalaimani D**[2]

[1]*Department of Business Management, Kongu Arts and Science College, Erode, India*

[2]*Department of Business Management, Sri Vasavi College, Erode, India*

*Corresponding author: Shanmugavadivu KV, Department of Business Management, Kongu Arts and Science College, Erode, India, E-mail: vadivuanand77@gmail.com

Abstract

Stress affects us all. We may notice symptoms of stress when disciplining our kids, during busy times at work, when managing our finances, or when coping with a challenging relationship. Stress is everywhere. And while a little stress is OK -- some stress is actually beneficial too much stress can wear us down and make us sick, both mentally and physically. Stress is high in software profession because of their nature of work, target, achievements, night shift, over work load. To study the demographic profile of the employees. To access the level of job stress and quality of life of the respondents. 3. To study in detail the health problems of the employees. Early diagnosis of stress induced health problems can be made out by stress scores, intense lifestyle modification, diet advice along with psychological counseling would reduce the incidence of health problems in IT sector and improve the quality of work force.

Keywords: Job Stress; Information technology; Business process outsourcing; Health; workforce

Introduction

Stress

Stress is the body's reaction to any change that requires an adjustment or response. The body reacts to these changes with physical, mental, and emotional responses. Stress is a normal part of life. You can experience stress from your environment, your body, and your thoughts. Even positive life changes such as a promotion, a mortgage, or the birth of a child produce stress. Stress is a normal reaction the body has when changes occur. It can respond to these changes physically, mentally, or emotionally. Stress at work is a relatively new phenomenon of modern lifestyles. The word, STRESS" has been derived from Latin word, "Stringere" which means to draw tight. The term is used to refer to hardship, strain, adversity or affliction. Various terms have been synonymously used with stress such as anxiety, frustration, and pressure the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change [1]. Stress is not a useful term for scientists because it is such a highly subjective phenomenon that it defies definition.

Occupational stress

Occupational Stress is stress at work. Stress is defined in terms of its physical and physiological effects in a person. Stress is mental, physical or emotional strain or tension or it is a situation or factor that can cause distress. Occupational stress occurs when there is a discrepancy between the demands of the workplace and an individual's ability to carry out and complete these demands. Often a stressor can lead the body to have a physiological change which in turn will cause physical as well as mental strain.

Major Sources of Stress in It Industry

It is a well-established fact that specific conditions cause stress in an individual differ from one person to another. This is mainly due to the fact that a specific situation is perceived differently by different people. However, there are some specific situations that can cause workplace stress. The workplace had become a high stress environment in many organizations cutting across industries. In IT industry, employees were experiencing high level of stress due to various factors. Some of the major sources of stresses in the IT industry are explained below;

Long working hours

The fear of losing a job make employees want to work harder to be able to outperform their colleagues in the desire to impress the bosses.Long hours, in itself, is a combination of work load. In the industry workload is tremendous plus the time involved in traveling between home and office. The employees have to work for 11-12 hours per day-the number goes up to 14 in case of companies that encourage overtime.

Technology

Computers and mobile phones were developed to make life easier, faster and more convenient for man. However, with new technologies being launched each day there is a large pressure on workers to stay up-to-date with every new technology. Accompanied by this, the workload does not seem to have reduced with the use of technologies. Instead the demands from humans keep increasing continuously [2].

Job insecurity

The competition in the market, economic conditions, mergers and acquisitions and better technologies are making resources redundant. In such a situation every employee is pushed towards saving his place irrespective of what it takes to do so. Back-biting, taking credit for where it is not due and other such unprofessional behavior breeds.

Discrimination

While not a global cause of workplace stress, discrimination is however extremely rampant in various offices. The discrimination could be on the basis of sex, race, religion or nationality. Any such discrimination makes the targeted employee feel extremely tense at work all the time. While the first thing that comes to mind is sexual

harassment that is fairly rampant, especially in IT industries where large number of female employees are employed, other forms of physical harassment and mental torture have also been known to exist.

Economic factors

With the industrial and the information technology revolution, better productivity has become possible. This has resulted in investors putting pressure on the management to get better bottom line results.

Harassment

Economic problems created by individuals overextending their financial resources are another set of personal troubles that can create stress for employees and distract their attention from their work. Personality type

Personality characteristics such as authoritarianism, rigidly, masculinity, femininity, extraversion, supportiveness, spontaneity, emotionality, tolerance, locus of control, anxiety, and need for achievements are particularly relevant to individual stress.

Work overload

Too much work causes stress to an employee. Excess workload has become the norm these days as more and more organizations have reduced their work-force and restructured work, leaving the remaining employees with more tasks and fewer resources of time to complete them.

Role conflict

Role conflict occurs where people face competing demands. There are two types of role conflict in the organization. Interrole conflict occurs when an employee has two roles that are in conflict with each other [3]. Personal conflict occurs when personal values clash with organizational goals.

Role ambiguity

Role ambiguity exists when employees are uncertain about their responsibilities, functions, performance expectations and levels of authority. This tends to occur when people enter new situations, such as joining the organization or taking foreign assignments, because they are uncertain about tasks and social expectations.

Warning signs of stress
- Chronic stress can wear down the body's natural defenses, leading to a variety of physical symptoms, including the following:
- Dizziness or a general feeling of "being out of it."
- General aches and pains.
- Grinding teeth, clenched jaw.
- Headaches.
- Indigestion or acid reflux symptoms.
- Increase in or loss of appetite.
- Muscle tension in neck, face or shoulders.
- Problems sleeping.
- Racing heart.
- Cold and sweaty palms.
- Tiredness, exhaustion.
- Trembling/shaking.
- Weight gain or loss.

- Upset stomach, diarrhea.
- Sexual difficulties.

The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can be positive, keeping us alert, motivated, and ready to avoid danger. Stress becomes negative when a person faces continuous challenges without relief or relaxation between stressors. As a result, the person becomes overworked, and stress-related tension builds. The body's autonomic nervous system has a built-in stress response that causes physiological changes to allow the body to combat stressful situations.

Stress Managing Techniques

Positive and negative coping methods
- We would be discussing the positive coping in the Kosha model of stress but, for greater awareness, we must see how we cope negatively and that it become a vicious circle.
- Some negative paths are illustrated below:
- Impulsive Behaviour: Acting before thinking about consequences, brining, continually getting into trouble.
- Compulsive Behaviour: Addictive-like behaviour that gets out of control and results in overindulging, alcoholism, drug abuse, excessive eating, smoking, shopping, sex, gambling.
- Obsessive Behaviour: Meticulous-like behaviour that we find the need to repeat over again- picky, neat freak, overly organised, rigid thinking, inflexible, etc.
- Vindictive Behaviour: Seeking revenge for real or imagined hurts or offenses, conniving, stubborn.
- Blaming Behaviour: Laying the blame for problems on others, fault finding, overly critical.
- Worrying: Anxious, tense, keeping the problem in constant focus, not being able to let go of it, mulling over the problem in your mind.
- Anger: Having temper tantrums, ventilating hostility, using sarcasm, cynicism, and screaming.
- Withdrawn Behaviour: Denial of problem, passivity in the face of stress, pulling away, isolation.
- Depressed Behaviour: Weepy or tearful, blue, despairing, guilty, downcast, and lethargic.
- llness: Real or psychosomatic illnesses, headaches, back pain, muscle tension, gastrointestinal problems, hypertension, and diabetes. There are many illnesses related to stress, some terminal.

Let food be the medicine

Some people live to eat and a few eat to live. Every activity is dependent on the energy we derive from the intake of food. At least 50% of executives feel that the food they like and enjoy are not good for them. Most of us view food in complex ways:

- Emotional satisfaction in a hostile world
- Means of recovering expended energy
- Occasion – marriage, free lunch
- Cultural customs
- Individual likes and dislikes
- Coping with stress
- Availability factor
- Economic-cost factor

Components of food

People don't want to be told to eat vegetables, fruit and soup all the time. "Eating healthy does not mean starving; it means eating foods the right way and in right quantities," says Jyotsna Radja, nutritionist, Apollo Health. Foods are composed of six classes of nutrients:

- Carbohydrates – simple, complex
- Protein
- Fats – saturated, unsaturated
- Vitamins – A, B, C, D, E, K
- Minerals
- Fiber
- Water – mineral, plain water

Carbohydrates

We can increase tolerance to stress by increasing our intake of complex carbohydrates to as much as 80% of our caloric intake.

Protein

The word protein is of Greek derivation, meaning 'primary' or 'holding first place'. This is an indication of the importance of protein in the diet. Protein helps to build new cells and repair damaged tissues.

Vitamins and minerals

These are essential for growth, tissue repair and regulating the metabolism. Most vitamins cannot be made in the body so it is important to ensure that we get them from our food. Vitamins and their uses.

- Vitamin A
- Vitamin B
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin D
- Vitamin E

Minerals and their uses

Calcium and phosphorus for adults during pregnancy and old age, for all cases of calcium deficiency, and for protecting teeth and bones.Iron for common symptoms of iron deficiency are fatigue, rough skin and brittle hair, susceptibility to infections, palpitations, loss of appetite and breathlessness.Iodine for Promotes physical and mental energy and alertness. Aids assimilation of Vitamin E.

Some simple exercises at work

Facial Tensions is to simulate yawning. Close eyes and yawn three times. When yawning, exhale. On exhaling let go of the tension. Leg: alternatively curl and stretch the toes three times; alternatively bend and stretch the legs three times; rotate ankles, knee three times; place leg on the floor and loosen hip alternatively drawing arms back.

Arms/Hands to move hands up and down bending from wrist three times; stretch fingers, then make fist three times; do for wrist and elbow three times.

Shoulders to raise right then left shoulder up towards the ear; alternatively, three times tense and drop; move shoulders forward then backward; cross left arms and right arms over chest; place finger on shoulders and slowly draw circle clockwise and anticlockwise.

Head and Neck to drop the chin to the chest. Feel the weight of the head stretch out to the back of your neck (hold); Look as far as you can over your right shoulder (hold); Look as far as over your left shoulder (hold); Drop your right ear to your left shoulder (hold). So, here are a few tips:

- Start easy - especially if you have been inactive
- Make it fun - do something you enjoy
- Join a team or group
- Work out with a friend
- Cross-train – vary routine by engaging in various activities.

Massage

Massage Therapy (MT) can be useful for treating those with acute or chronic physical pains as well as psychological problems such as eating disorders, inadequate self-image, lack of confidence, physical, sexual and emotional abuse victims and many more. Progressive Muscles Relaxation: this involves systematically tensing and relaxing sixteen muscle groups throughout our body [4]. This involves five steps in all:

- Focus attention on a particular muscle group
- Tense the muscle group
- Hold the maintain the tension for five to seven seconds
- Release the tension in muscle group
- Spend twenty to thirty seconds focusing on letting go of tension and further relaxing the muscle groups.

Tips for reducing stress

People can learn to manage stress and lead happier, healthier lives. You may want to begin with the following tips:

- Keep a positive attitude.
- Accept that there are events that you cannot control.
- Be assertive instead of aggressive. Assert your feelings, opinions, or beliefs instead of becoming angry, defensive, or passive.
- Learn and practice relaxation techniques; try meditation, yoga, or tai-chi.
- Exercise regularly. Your body can fight stress better when it is fit.
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Learn to manage your time more effectively.
- Set limits appropriately and say no to requests that would create excessive stress in your life.
- Make time for hobbies and interests.
- Get enough rest and sleep. Your body needs time to recover from stressful events.
- Don't rely on alcohol, drugs, or compulsive behaviors to reduce stress.
- Seek out social support. Spend enough time with those you love.
- Seek treatment with a psychologist or other mental health professional trained in stress management or biofeedback techniques to learn more healthy ways of dealing with the stress in your life.

Methodology Objectives

1. To study the socio-economic characteristics of the software professionals.
2. To access the level of job stress of the respondents.
3. To know the level of job satisfaction of the respondents.
4. To find the health problems of the employees.

A detailed survey questionnaire was used to collect primary information from the sample respondents with a sample size of 317 randomly among IT professionals at various positions. A questions regarding the nature of the work, employment status, job satisfaction, stress causing factors in an organization, working hours, work environment and health problems. The collected information was analyzed and the results were presented

Review of Literature

Review of literature paves way for a clear understanding of the areas of research already undertaken and throws a light on the potential areas which are yet to be covered. Keeping this view in mind, an attempt has been made to make a brief survey of the work undertaken on the field of occupational stress. This chapter deals with the review of literature concerned with the subject of this study.Associated workplace factors with stress and health risks that can be categorised as those to do with the content of work and those to do with the social and organisational context of work (Figure 2.1). Those that are intrinsic to the job include long hours, work overload, time pressure, difficult or complex tasks, lack of breaks, lack of variety, and poor physical work conditions (for example, space, temperature, light).McCaffrey and Blanchard,(1985), they stressed that India being a leading sector in Information Technology, its development largely depends on its employee's mental and physical health. Moderate stress is long term might be a risk factor for developing various health problems among software engineers. This might indirectly hinder the progress of software organizations. Preventive strategies like training in stress management might help the software professionals to cope with their profession better without affecting their lifestyle and health [5].

Theoritical Aspects of It Industry

Information Technology (IT) industry in India has got a tremendous boost due to globalization of Indian economy and favorable government policies. IT and IT related professionals are at a constant pressure to deliver services efficiently and have to be cost effective. Workplace stress" is the harmful physical and emotional responses that can happen when there is a conflict between job demands on the employee and the amount of control an employee has over meeting these demands. In general, the combination of high demands in a job and a low amount of control over the situation can lead to stress. Stress in the workplace can have many origins or come from one single event. It can impact on both employees and employers alike. The present article is concerned with how the Information technology and the consequent change in job culture affect work stress, mental health IT professionals. It was discussed that employee's difficulties with stress within organization that continually introduce new technology and computer software into the work environment (http://faculty.lagcc.cuny.edu). Symptoms of stress are reviewed and employer and employee options to reduce stress are examined. The present study takes a holistic view of personhood and considers job stress as one imposed upon and interacting with other stressors. Therefore the study focuses on psychological distress, sense of wellness and organizational role stress of IT professionals as associated with stressful life events and coping resources.strength and coping techniques. Therefore, the present study is planned to investigate whether job level will influence once occupational stress, job satisfaction, mental health and coping strategies of junior and senior managers of the IT industries.

Interpretation

According to the questionnaire conducted by the IT Professionals 64% of them are undergraduates and 26% of them are post graduates and 10% of them are diploma. Majority (44%) of IT professionals are entry level professionals; followed by 38% of middle level professionals and 18% of them are senior level professionals. 50% of the respondents whose nature of job is temporary and 40% of them are in permanent jobs and small groups of people are unaware of the nature of the job and some of them are having part-time job. The study revealed that 36% of the respondents were satisfied with their present job and remaining 40% of them have voted for a neutral statement and 24% of the respondents are not satisfied with the current job. 60% of the respondents revealed that physical environment is the reason for stress due to increase in workload and improper recognition and biased treatment of superiors. Forty per cent of them have frequent arguments with superiors; 24% they never entered into an argument with their superiors and 36% of them rarely disagree with the opinion of the superiors.

S.No.	Health Problems	No. of Respondents		Percent age	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
1	Headache	171	52	76.69	23.31
2	Back pain	132	91	59.19	40.81
3	Sinus / Asthma	45	178	20.18	79.82
4	Hypertensions	74	149	33.19	66.81
5	Allergies	62	161	27.81	72.19
6	Heart Disease	14	209	6.28	93.72
7	Anger	42	181	18.83	81.17
8	Depression/ Anxiety	107	116	47.98	52.02
9	Skin Problem / Hair	113	110	50.67	49.33
10	Blood Pressure	51	172	22.87	77.13
11	Lack of Sleep	197	26	88.34	11.66
12	Diabetes	12	211	5.38	94.62
13	Eye problems	46	177	20.63	79.37

Table1: Health Problems faced by the employees.

Conclusion

The daily impact of IT on our lives continues unabated. As innovations and computer capacities increase this influence will continue to grow in the coming years at an increasing rate. As

technology advances, there is also increased stress that is associated with it called as "technology stress." IT is here to stay. This brings extra pressure on people to adapt to new advancements and update their knowledge in their field. Stress management programs like yoga, meditation and other distressing activities like aerobics, dance etc., would prevent or reduce risk of disease due to stress in IT people which in turn will produce a healthy community.To manage stress these people need to play sport, have a hobby or just have a good holiday. Healthy employees mean better performance by employee that in turn produces a healthy community.

References

1. Caplan RD, Jones KW (1975) Effect of workload, Role ambiguity and type of personality. J Appl Psycol 20: 713-719.

2. BushraBano, Jha RK (2012) Organizational Stress among Public and Private Sector Employees. Lahore J Bussin 1: 23-36.

3. Kala K, Jan NA, Subramani AK, Banureka R (2017) Upshot of occupational stress on work life balance of employees working in information technology organizations in Chennai. Prabandhan. Indian J Manag 10: 50-59.

4. Vimala B, Madhavi C (2009) A study on stress and depression experienced by women IT professionals in Chennai, India. Psychol Res Behav Manag 2: 81.

5. Chitra T, Karunanidhi S (2021) The impact of resilience training on occupational stress, resilience, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being of female police officers. J Police and Criminal Psychol 36: 8-23.