



A STUDY ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG IT PROFESSIONALS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE AT KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Industrial development along with technology is very important for the development of our country. Since the early years of software development, it has various challenging boundaries in several dimensions like number of developers involved in a development project, short time for market demand, necessity for innovation and the immense use of globally distributed teams for implementing software. The current world has enormous competition to survive in their business strategies, which needs more and fast working people. This leads to stress among the employees. Stress is unavoidable among human beings in this fast industrial world. Especially the development of technology expects more from the human beings. Enhancing the strength of individuals internal resources such as hardiness and self-esteem are assumed to act as buffer while encountering any stressful events in occupational life. In this study, the stress management among the IT professionals in Kanyakumari district has been studied and the major findings have been presented.

KEYWORDS: stress, employees, IT professionals, workload, strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is an upset in the body's balance due to physical and mental stimuli. Stress manifests in different ways including fatigue, chronic headaches, irritation, heart diseases, low self-esteem and diminished forward drive to achieve productivity. Such adverse reactions are seen to contribute mental and physical illness. Jobs in the software field are often characterized by long working period, minimum social interaction, night shift, job insecurity, up gradation of new technology, time bounded projects and continuous visual focusing over the monitors lead for occupational stress.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) defines occupational stress as "the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match with the capabilities, resources or needs of the worker. Schuler also identifies seven categories of work stressors in organisations like job qualities, relationships, organisational structure, physical qualities, career development, change and role in the organisation. The detrimental effects of occupational stress range from sleep disturbances, poor concentration, low morale, poor peer relations etc to major problems like cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal disorders and psychological disorders. High levels of stress related illness causes various diseases across the country amongst various occupations mainly in software professionals with the up-surge in the field of Information Technology (IT) in the recent past.



NHS Health Scotland also insists for good mental health as a basic component of positive health and wellbeing. It is necessary for the working environment to help us manage our lives successfully and provide us with the emotional and spiritual resilience to allow us to enjoy life and deal with distress and disappointment. Information technology industry is a key driving force of global economic growth. Economies of scale and insatiable demand from both consumers and enterprises characterize this rapidly growing sector. The Indian IT industry has played a key role in putting India on the world map. This sector requires its workforce to be highly mobile and open to travel between locations. The important characteristics of this sector are the employee relationship with management, in which a lot of emphasis is given to attraction, development, and retention of the workforce. Information Technology professionals are constantly under pressure to deliver the services efficiently as well as to remain cost effective. The customer expectation in terms of skills required for processing jobs keep changing and force professionals to upgrade/adapt very fast to their demands. At this juncture, Information Technology professionals are forced to change their entire pattern of work with constant uncertainty and high risk. These working environments create high level of stress in the minds of IT professionals. Organisations have started recognizing high stress as a worthy area to redress for the wellbeing of human and reducing attrition rate. Therefore, the researcher attempts to study the jobs stress among IT professionals with special reference at Kanyakumari district.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the main objectives of the study

- To find out the various reasons for stress among the IT professionals in Kanyakumari district.
- To identify the work related factors which affect the personal life of IT professionals.
- To identify the current strategies adopted by the employer and employees to overcome stress related issues.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the present scenario, the dream of many of the engineering as well as management students is IT industry where one can not only have job for a decent package but also determines the social status. Such an industry is now being afflicted by occupational stress. It has taken its deep root in the minds of many of the respondents in the field of information Technology. It is obvious that it will definitely have its serious impact on the overall growth of our nation. The Government and also the IT industries should take necessary steps on a war foot basis to uproot such a stress from the minds of the employees. So it is the duty of both Government and the industrialist to identify such factors for stress and find immediate solutions to put an end to this problem. The major objective of the researcher in this field is that, it would benefit the software employees, software employers, indirect employees, their families and nation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Chandran (2012) in his study, Working Conditions and Health Among Employees at Information Technology Enabled Services: A review of current evidence identified that muscular-skeletal disorders, ocular disorders and psycho-social problems were some of the key health problems observed among software professionals. There is a need for implementation of programmes that include the concepts of ergonomics, health education and training of personnel to prevent and overcome the morbidity as well as psycho-social problems among workers in software industry.

Rao (2011) in his article, Job satisfaction was positively and significantly correlated with coping behaviour. The mental health is negatively and significantly correlated with occupational stress. It can be explained that job satisfaction and mental health increases coping behaviour increases and as stress increases mental health decreases.

Wyatt (2002) 'Staying at Work Canada' survey indicated that psychological conditions (depression, anxiety, stress and other conditions that affect the psychological health of employees) were the leading

cause of short-term disability (STD) claims, while 73 percent confirm that these conditions are also the leading cause of long-term disability (LTD) claims. The same survey estimated that most companies spend 2 to 3 percent of their payroll on short term disability claims, of which half may be stress-related.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

In spite of the precautions and carefulness taken by the investigator to make the study objectives, it cannot be denied that there are certain limitations.

1. The employees were reluctant to give correct information due to their busy schedule and confidential nature.
2. The study was intended to cover only few areas of stress relevant to the proposed study; hence it cannot be generalized in a wider aspect.
3. As the study was done within a limited time, investigator could not select sufficiently large sample for the study.
4. The geographical characters of Kanyakumari district considerably vary with other places of India; hence it cannot be generalized for the entire India.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is empirical in nature, based on the primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from 93 sample respondents with the help of questionnaire. Secondary data was collected from the reports, journals, books, magazines and internet.

• Primary Data

The primary data required for the study which has been collected with the help of well structured questionnaire and the data is collected from the respondents.

• Secondary Data

The secondary data are collected from journals, books, reports, unpublished thesis and published materials are used. It is also downloaded from internet.

STRESS

Stress is a negative consequence of modern living. People are stressed due to overwork, job insecurity, overload and the increasing pace of life. These events produce distress, physiological, psychological and behavioural deviation from healthy functioning. In the modern world, material goods and standard of living determine societal status to a greater extent than family and education. Higher income means a better quality of psychological and physical fulfillment of career aspirations of both spouses. However, this does not come without any cost. Dual career families face considerable stress and strain. Always priority is given to the husband's career and the wife's career is accorded only secondary status. Another problem is decision regarding having a child. Many couples including women believe that child rearing would increase their domestic responsibilities and as a hindrance to their work life. These problems become even more crucial if the family is a nuclear one. Due to the rapid growth of IT, the life is fast and the people are not able to run a smooth life even though with a higher income.

CAUSES OF STRESS

Many different reasons can cause stress from physical to emotional. Some of the most common sources of stress are:

- ❖ Survival stress
- ❖ Internal stress
- ❖ Environmental stress
- ❖ Fatigue and overwork

- ❖ Job control
- ❖ Job insecurity
- ❖ Violence and harassment

STRESS FACTS AROUND THE WORLD

- 75 percent of adults reported experiencing moderate to high levels of stress in the work environment and nearly half reported that their stress has increased in the past year – *American Psychological Association*.
- 80 percent of workers feel stress on the job and nearly half say they need help in learning how to manage stress and 42 percent say their co-workers need such help – *American Psychological Association*.
- Depression is among the leading causes of disability worldwide – *World Health Organisation*

ANAYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS

Age is one of the variables which express the attitude and talents of the human. Young people can work more according to the expectation of the concern. The different age group of the respondents are classified and presented in the following table

TABLE: 1 AGE WISE CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

| S. No. | AGE | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|--------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | 18 - 25 | 24 | 26 |
| 2. | 26 - 35 | 37 | 40 |
| 3. | 36 - 45 | 17 | 18 |
| 4. | Above 45 years | 15 | 16 |
| | Total | 93 | 100 |

Source: Primary Data

From the table it is clear that 40 percent of the respondents come under the age group of 26-35 years, 26 percent of them are in the age group of 18-25 years, 18 percent of them are in the age group 36-45 years and the remaining 16 percent are more than 45 years age.

WORKING HOURS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Working hours may change according to the requirement of job in different companies and people may work for more hours to complete their task to earn more. Here in the below table the working hours of the respondents were classified and presented.

TABLE 2: CLASSIFICATION OF WORKING HOURS OF THE RESPONDENTS

| S. No. | WORKING HOURS | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|--------|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | 8 hours | 33 | 36 |
| 2. | 10 hours | 45 | 48 |
| 3. | More than 10 hours | 15 | 16 |
| | Total | 93 | 100 |

Source: Primary Data

Form the above table, it is evident that 48 percent of the respondents work for 10 hours a day, 36 percent of them work for 8 hours and 16 percent of them are working for more than 10 hours a day.

FEELING OF STRESS OF THE RESPONDENTS

Nowadays no job is said to be free out of stress, especially in the field of information technology which creates a higher level of stress among its employees. The opinions regarding stress are presented in the following table.

TABLE 3: OPINION OF STRESS FEELING

| S. No. | RESPONSE | FREQUENCY | PERCENT |
|--------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Yes | 93 | 100 |
| 2. | No | 0 | 0 |
| | Total | 93 | 100 |

Source: Primary Data

The above table exhibits that all the respondents feel stress in their job.

TABLE 4: ATTRIBUTES OF STRESS

| S. No. | ATTRIBUTES | FREQUENCY | Percent |
|--------|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1. | Communication gap | 14 | 15 |
| 2. | Lack of skills | 7 | 8 |
| 3. | Work life imbalance | 25 | 27 |
| 4. | Work environment | 19 | 20 |
| 5. | Unmatched expectation | 28 | 30 |
| | Total | 93 | 100 |

Source: Primary Data

The table specifies that 30 percent of respondents feel that their expectation was unmatched for the job, 27 percent feels that work life imbalance is there and 8 percent feels that they are lack in the skills required for their job.

REASONS FOR STRESS

There are a lot of reasons for the stress among the respondents and are presented in the table below:

TABLE 5: REASONS FOR STRESS

| S. No. | REASONS FOR STRESS | FREQUENCY |
|--------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Work overload | 12 |
| 2. | Lack of acceptability | 10 |
| 3. | Taking work to home | 15 |
| 4. | Lack of support | 4 |
| 5. | Technology problem | 8 |
| 6. | Over expectation of work demand | 13 |

Source: Primary Data

From the above table, it can be seen that while taking the work to home beyond office time is the major reason for their stress followed by over expectation, work over load, lack of acceptability, technical problems and lack of support. Hence it can be concluded that all of the respondents are having one or more reasons for having stress.

WORK RELATED STRESS IMPACT IN PERSONAL LIFE**TABLE 6: STRESS IMPACT IN PERSONAL LIFE**

| S. No. | STRESS IMPACT | FREQUENCY |
|--------|--|-----------|
| 1. | Check mail after returning home | 19 |
| 2. | Additional work than normal job | 28 |
| 3. | Work on week-ends | 11 |
| 4. | Check back office even in vacation | 20 |
| 5. | Work late night at home | 15 |
| 6. | Non-participation in communal activities | 17 |
| 7. | Office meeting on personal time | 20 |
| 8. | Work beyond normal time at office | 13 |

Source: Primary Data

From the above table, it can be identified that the respondents opine that they have additional work exceeds their normal nature of job followed by the factor that their personal time is used for office meeting, work even in vacation time etc are few factors which effect their personal life to a great extent.

SELF STRATEGIES TO REDUCE STRESS**TABLE 7: SELF STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY RESPONDENTS TO REDUCE STRESS**

| S. No. | STRATEGIES | FREQUENCY |
|--------|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Walking | 37 |
| 2. | Spending with family | 19 |
| 3. | Yoga | 23 |
| 4. | Involvement in entertainment | 23 |
| 5. | Getting advice from experts | 15 |

Source: Primary Data

From the above table, it is evident that all the respondents are adopting various strategies to reduce stress. The most preferred one is walking followed by yoga, entertainment, spending time with family and advice from experts.

MODE OF STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY THE COMPANY**TABLE 8: MODE OF STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY THE COMPANY**

| S. No. | STRATEGIES | FREQUENCY |
|--------|---------------------|-----------|
| 1. | Training programmes | 21 |
| 2. | Organising tour | 17 |
| 3. | Health promotion | 19 |
| 4. | Yoga class | 13 |
| 5. | Seminars | 13 |
| 6. | Counselling | 10 |
| 7. | Awareness programme | 14 |
| 8. | Others | 10 |

Source: Primary Data

From the above table, it can be identified that the company has adopted more strategies to reduce stress among its employees the most important one is providing training programme followed by health promotion measures, offering tour package etc. So it is inferred that the employees can be given training to overcome stress.

RECOMENDATONS

1. To reduce stress the employees can be provided adequate recreation facility within the premises of the management.
2. The working hours are to be modified because more time of work leads the employees more stress. Hence the target of the job can be delegated to all the workers equally.
3. The companies should provide an adequate leave facility, which provides necessary work-life balance in the employees' life.
4. The employees may be given requisite training to prevent anxiety and ambiguity in their job.
5. Proper grievance handling system should be practiced to help the employees to overcome their problems.

CONCLUSIONS

Stress is a common every day event. At present, stress in the work place is more when compared to past years. Much of the stress at work is caused by work overload and time pressure and lack of acceptability. Organisation should manage people at work differently by treating them with respect and valuing their contribution. To a large degree, stress lies in the eye of the beholder. When one feels threatened by events depend on how one appraises them. The reasons for stress and the various factors that affect the causes of employees stress were studied. It also looks into the strategies which helps them to overcome the stress. In this research, it was found that IT professionals are more stressed due to work overload, taking work to home, lack of support, over expectation of work demand. It was also found that the present situation is not easy for the employees. It also finds out that "better the stress management, better will be the work life balance of the employees". Both the company and the employees themselves had adopted certain strategies to reduce stress. Hence it is clear that all the employees are facing different stress in respective jobs. The working hours are to be modified because more time of work leads the employees more stress. So, it is concluded that the company should consider their employees to reduce stress and to improve the well being of their employees.

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