



EMPLOYEES' ATTITUDE TOWARDS STRESS COPING STRATEGIES OF THE SELECT IT COMPANIES IN PUDUCHERRY

S.Anuradha* K.Vinu**

*Head of the Department, Department of Commerce, RAAK Arts & Science College, Villianur, Pondicherry .

**Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Annamalai University, Annamalainagar .

Abstract

In working, every human being has to set foot in specific work condition, which is different from residence and familiar places. Stress occurs in many different circumstances, but is particularly strong when a person's ability to control the demands of work is threatened. The IT companies can implement the necessary measures to create healthy work life management and stress programs by effectively assessing stressors, causes for work life imbalance and job dissatisfaction that will be the differentiating factor of a mediocre business to increase the performance and productivity. With this background, the researchers have made an attempt to study the stress coping strategies of the select IT companies in Puducherry. This study is confined to the women employees of the select IT companies in Puducherry. There are more than 30 IT companies in operation in Puducherry. In the present study, 3 IT companies namely, Waysure Technologies, Roadmap IT Solutions and Zeuxine Technologies are only selected on purposive basis. In the second stage, by adopting quota sampling 300 women employees i.e. 100 employees were selected from each company. As an essential part of the study, the primary data were collected for a period of 6 months from January 2016 to June 2016. The secondary data were collected mainly from journals, reports, books, and records of the select IT companies in Puducherry. In order to analyze the stress coping strategies of the select IT companies, student t test, analysis of variance, co-efficient of variation, multiple regression analysis and percentage analysis were employed. The findings of this study bring to light that a significant relationship is found among the acceptance levels of the respondents belonging to different age groups and cadres towards stress coping strategies in the select IT companies. No significant relationship among the acceptance levels of the respondents of different educational status groups, salary groups, varied tenure of experience and IT companies towards stress coping strategies of the select IT companies. Having broader perspective of life will definitely change the perception of stress. To ensure a positive outcome, attention to the factors identified in the suggested framework is important for reducing the work stress of women employees in the select IT companies.

Keywords: Stress, Work Stress, Work-Home Imbalance, Etc.

Introduction

Stress is very common in day to day life. Now a day's it's become our part of life. Work related stress in the life of organized workers, consequently, affects the health of organizations. Job stress is a chronic disease caused by conditions in the workplace that negatively affect an individual's performance and overall well-being of his body and mind. A metamorphic change is occurring all over the world with the advent of information technology. Information technology revolution not only increases the employment opportunities and GDP of a country, but also contributes to a cultural transformation and social revolution. The Indian women, who were mostly found in a socially acceptable employment like teaching, nursing, banking, etc. in the last decade, are diverted now and actively participate in the information technology revolution. It has become a common phenomenon that majority of the employees, especially the knowledge workers, are working harder and longer ever before. This new information technology profession with a good pay, night shifts, cultural and social change has brought work stress among the women employees in information technology sector.

Causes for Work Stress

Stress in the workplace is a growing concern in the current state of the economy, where employees increasingly face conditions of overwork, job insecurity, low levels of job satisfaction, and lack of autonomy. In working, every human being has to set foot in specific work condition, which is different from residence and familiar places. Stress occurs in many different circumstances, but is particularly strong when a person's ability to control the demands of work is threatened. Work stress is caused by environmental factors threatening the work of an individual. They are workloads, hazardous roles, role conflict, and unhealthy work conditions, high responsible job and relation with others such as colleagues and so on. The stressful experience is intensified if no help is available from colleagues or supervisors at work. Therefore, social isolation and lack of cooperation increase the risk of prolonged stress at work. Conversely, work tasks with a high degree of personal control and skill variety, and a work environment with supportive social relationship; contribute to workers' well-being and health.



Statement of the Problem

Workplaces were transformed by globalization, privatization, process reengineering, mergers and acquisitions, strategic alliances, joint ventures and the like. All across the world a revolution is being waged in information technology and India is being recognized globally for its new found mantra, information technology, which has its root in the success started by the development of India's export led IT companies. The rise of the IT industry has also fed into ongoing processes of globalization, stimulating significant transformations in the urban middle classes and in the cultural milieu of Indian cities. These include changes in lifestyles, forms of sociality, family structure, and self-identity, which are linked to the rapid upward socio-economic development. But on the other hand, the nature of job in IT industry has a negative impact on the employees' physical and mental health. IT work tends to be high-pressure and the workflow is regulated by the tyranny of deadlines and project timelines, and software engineers are always struggling to meet unrealistic deadlines and firefighting last minute crises. The IT profession has sprouted suicides, divorces, cardiac ailments, and depression, apparently more than its proportionate share. Along with the access to international travel and the ability to mingle with people of different cultures has also arrived the deep isolation of late hours, no social life outside of immediate family, no hobbies, and few and brief vacations. There is also the loss of job security; employees have to perform and deliver on projects on time to retain their hold on jobs; they also have to refresh their skills constantly, often under pressure of an immediate project deadline. This pattern of work is largely responsible for the high levels of stress that are typical in this industry. This kind of pressure is there for both men and women but still it is true that women have to cope with practical problems of balancing work at home and office in the social and family set-up. With increase in percentage of women employees, certain issues related with women has also increased like health problems, safety issues, etc. High salaries and social status associated with the IT sector has attracted women to take up these jobs, but many suffer on account of various factors like late working hours. For IT companies, the adverse effects of stress may act as an impediment to performance and to the change process. The effects may be seen in poor job performance, high levels of absenteeism, discontent among the workforce, high turnover of labour with the loss of good employees, and a large increase in recruitment and retraining costs.

Apart from it there are varieties of factors that make women employee feel positive or negative about their job. Moreover, some employees may be satisfied with a few aspects of their work but dissatisfied with all other aspects. Factors that lead to positive or negative perceptions of work life imbalance and stress have their own impact on job satisfaction. This mental stress for women lead to physical stress and cause ill health, headache, gastritis, body ache, de-motivation, low morale, etc. or lead to long-term cardiac problems, high blood pressure, diabetes or other psychiatric problems and low job performance. All these problems generate work life conflict, intense stress and job dissatisfaction especially for women employees. The IT companies can implement the necessary measures to create healthy work life management and stress programs by effectively assessing stressors, causes for work life imbalance and job dissatisfaction that will be the differentiating factor of a mediocre business to increase the performance and productivity. Inherently, certain research questions arise. With this background, the researchers have made an attempt to study the stress coping strategies of the select IT companies in Puducherry.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To study the attitude of women employees towards stress coping strategies of the select IT companies in Puducherry.
2. To offer suitable measures to overcome the stress of the women employees in the IT companies based on the findings of the study.

Testing of Hypothesis

In order to examine the attitude of the women employees towards stress coping strategies of the select IT companies, the following null hypothesis was formulated and tested. H_0 : There is no significant relationship among the acceptance levels of the respondents belonging to different demographic variables towards stress coping strategies of the select IT companies.

Scope of the Study

The present study attempts to examine the stress coping strategies of the select IT companies in Puducherry. The study is confined to 3 IT companies namely, Waysure Technologies, Roadmap IT Solutions and Zeuxine Technologies. Work stress is a vast subject; therefore, the present study focuses its main attention only on the stress coping strategies of the select IT companies.

Sampling Design: This study is confined to the women employees of the select IT companies in Puducherry. There are more than 30 IT companies in operation in Puducherry. In the present study, 3 IT companies namely, Waysure Technologies, Roadmap IT Solutions and Zeuxine Technologies are only selected on purposive basis. In the second stage, by adopting quota sampling 300 women employees i.e. 100 employees were selected from each company.



Materials and Methods

The present study is empirical in nature based on survey method. The first-hand information for the study was collected from the select IT companies. As an essential part of the study, the primary data were collected from 300 women employees with the help of questionnaire for a period of 6 months from January 2016 to June 2016. The questionnaire was constructed based on Likert Scaling technique. The secondary data were collected mainly from journals, reports, books, and records of the select IT companies in Puducherry. In order to analyze the stress coping strategies of the select IT companies, student t test, analysis of variance, co-efficient of variation, multiple regression analysis and percentage analysis were employed.

Findings

1. A significant relationship is found among the acceptance levels of the respondents belonging to different age groups and cadres towards stress coping strategies in the IT companies. No significant relationship among the acceptance levels of the respondents of different educational status groups, salary groups, varied tenure of experience and IT companies towards stress coping strategies of the IT companies.
2. Respondents in the age group above 45 years, respondents having degree qualification, respondents drawing monthly salary Rs.20001-30000, technical employees, respondents with upto 5 years of experience and employees working at Roadmap IT Solutions have higher acceptance level towards stress coping strategies.
3. There is consistency in the acceptance level of respondents belonging to 26-35 years, respondents who have degree qualification, respondents drawing salary above Rs.40000, technical employees, respondents having 11-15 years of experience and employees of Waysure Technologies towards stress coping strategies of the select IT companies.
4. There has been a low correlation (0.156) between the overall score on the stress coping strategies and the selected personal variables. The R square indicates 2.40 per cent of variation in the coping strategies as explained by all personal variables taken together in the IT companies. The F value indicates that the multiple correlation coefficients are significant at 5 per cent significance level. Further, age, education, monthly salary, years of experience, marital status and family pattern of the women employees have no significant effect on the coping strategies for in the IT companies. Cadre of the respondents has significant influence on the stress coping strategies in the select IT companies.
5. The factor analysis is applied to find out the underlying dimensions in the set of statements dealing with coping strategies which were followed by the select IT companies to manage the stress of women employees. The 26 variables in the data were reduced to 7 factor model namely organization initiatives, family support, counseling, light exercises, heavy physical workout, diet maintenance and relaxation.
6. In regards to organizational initiatives for reducing work stress of women employees in the IT companies, majority of the respondents reveal that they strongly agree (36%), followed closely by agree (20.67%) and strongly disagree (18%). 15.67% and 9.67% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree and disagree respectively with the organizational initiatives for reducing work stress of women employees. The mean acceptance score reveals that the respondents have a higher acceptance level (4.01) towards management of job boredom by transfer, followed by conduct of knowledge up gradation and training programmes (3.97). In the case of running healthy club to upkeep general health of women employees, the respondents have a lower acceptance level (3.50).
7. Out of 300 respondents, majority of the respondents indicate that they strongly agree (41.33%) with the family support of the women employees to cope with work stress, followed by agree (21%) and strongly disagree (14%). 13% and 10.67% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree and disagree respectively with the family support. The mean acceptance score reveals that the respondents have a higher acceptance level (3.72) towards sharing problems with family members, friends and others, followed by going to temple, park, shopping, and native place for relaxation (3.53). The respondents have a lower acceptance level (3.13) towards consulting well-wishers to reduce stress in the IT companies.
8. Majority of the respondents indicate that they strongly disagree (43%) with the counseling given to women employees to reduce their work stress, followed by agree (19.33%) and neither agree nor disagree (15.67%). 13.67% and 8.33% of the respondents strongly agree and disagree respectively with the counseling given to women employees. The mean acceptance score reveals that the respondents have a higher acceptance level (2.94) towards



personal counseling given to them, followed by getting counseling from psychiatrist to cope with stress (2.11). In the case of practice of having nap for relieving of stress, the respondents have a lower acceptance level (2.04).

9. In regards to light exercise to reduce work stress, majority of the respondents reveal that they strongly disagree (47.33%), followed closely by neither agree nor disagree (19.67%) and strongly disagree (15.66%). 9.67% and 7.67% of the respondents agree and disagree respectively with the light exercise to reduce work stress of women employees. The mean acceptance score reveals that the respondents have a higher acceptance level (4.30) towards playing with pet animals, followed by walking to burnout stress (2.54). However, respondents have lower acceptance score towards taking hydrotherapy to reduce stress (1.95).
10. Majority of the respondents indicate that they strongly disagree (42.67%) with the heavy physical workout to reduce work stress of women employees in the IT companies, followed by neither agree nor disagree (17%) and strongly agree (15.33%). 13% and 12% of the respondents agree and disagree respectively with the heavy physical workout to reduce work stress. The mean acceptance score reveals that the respondents have a higher acceptance level (2.66) towards arrangements for indoor and outdoor games, followed by doing physical exercise for relieving of stress (2.47).
11. In regards to diet maintenance to reduce work stress, majority of the respondents reveal that they strongly disagree (44%), followed closely by neither agree nor disagree (23.67%) and strongly agree (14%). 12.33% and 6% of the respondents strongly agree and disagree respectively with the diet maintenance. The mean acceptance score reveals that the respondents have a higher acceptance level (2.70) towards consuming water for relieving stress, followed by defray the medical expenses (2.48). The respondents have a lower acceptance level (2.40) towards consumption of high caloric, more fibre and balance food to reduce the stress.
12. Out of 300 respondents, majority of the respondents indicate that they strongly disagree (42%) with the relaxation strategies to reduce work stress in the select IT companies, followed closely by neither agree nor disagree (22%) and strongly agree (17%). 13% and 6% of the respondents agree and disagree respectively with the relaxation. The mean acceptance score reveals that the respondents have a higher acceptance level (3.10) towards watching TV, hearing music, and indoor games, followed by practicing of meditation to cope with stress (2.77). The respondents have a lower acceptance level (2.33) towards reading self-development books for relieving stress.

Suggestions

1. Relaxation is the best strategy to reduce work stress. Every women employee should schedule time for relaxation in her routine. There are many relaxation skills including the use of music, meditation, diaphragmatic breathing exercises, aerobic exercise and muscle relaxation. Further, conducting spiritual programs at organizational level will leads to introspection of women employees and reduce stress to create more energetic and enriched platform which can increase organizational performance. To effectively combat stress, women employees need to activate the body's natural relaxation response. The regular practice of meditation helps in stress reduction by improving concentration, providing mental relaxation and enhancing clarity of thought.
2. IT sector is basically a joint intensive industry and much needs to be done in so far as work scheduling is concerned. Since the women employees have to work under strict times, it is essential that physical and mental comfort at work is ensured. Such an arrangement can weaken the intrinsic strain attached to the job. Therefore, initiatives that provide women employees balance and flexibility in their work arrangements go a long way toward alleviating work stress. These can include telecommuting, job sharing and reduced hours or compressed work weeks. The issue of flexible work arrangements has recently come under increasing scrutiny. Companies contemplating curtailing flexible work arrangements should weigh the intended benefits of such a change against the possibility of a backlash and the possible impact on women employee engagement among key talent segments.
3. Managing workplace stress and improving work relationships allows women employees to gain more control over their ability to think clearly and act appropriately. When the stress at work is climbing, women employees should try to take a short break and get away from the situation that is causing the stress. The women employees, can get outside of workplace, or spend a few minutes meditating in the break room. Physically moving, or finding a quiet place in order to regain a sense of balance can rapidly reduce the stress that the women employees are experiencing.
4. The management of the select IT companies is to create a friendly atmosphere to encourage and motivate women employees. Developing friendships with some of co-workers can help women employees to create a buffer from the



negative effects of workplace stress. It is important for women employees to listen to them and offer support when they need it too. Sometimes, sharing feelings and thoughts with someone, the woman employee trust can help to reduce stress.

5. Women employees in the IT companies must be given proper counseling and training to change the behaviour permanently so that they can be educated about the origin and consequences of gender stereotype. This training program must be able to guide them and impart skills to recognize biasness and deviation between the oral values and the actual behaviour. Such activities are necessary to highlight the causes and effects of gender inequality in the workplace. Many situational observations of employee-employer interaction identified within the organization can lead to depression and stress at work place. Therefore, the IT companies must implement different programs that help in breaking the barriers to women's advancement including career advancement programs, new diverse selection panels and performance evaluations schemes whose objectives must be to speed unambiguous environment.
6. Though professional/leadership skills of women need to upgrade, thus training must be organized by management, these programs will help women employees to fulfill criteria for the empowerment of women in IT sector. But women employees themselves tend to shy away from stances that directly challenge any built-in male professional biases as it currently exists. Women employees should never use 'being a women' as an excuse for failure. They must accept that if they want equal opportunity, they need to perform equally. Hence, the select IT companies need to create a nurturing environment for women employees.
7. There must be various internal and external communication channels for the women employees in the IT companies. This will help to convey the company's policies about gender inclusion and the empowerment of women. Small groups must be framed and mentors of groups must be designated who can interact with the women employees informally and can understand the problems of group members by intermingling with them and this will help women employees to distress by sharing their problems and finding solutions.
8. Wage systems must be made more transparent and different component of remuneration should be based on women employees' eligibility ensuring that all employees' condition and benefits are equal, such policies must be introduced. Also adopt policies that will make it less difficult for women employees to simultaneously manage their professional work and their family obligations. Women employee welfare and safety policies must measure women-specific welfare and safety needs.
9. Women employees in the select IT companies should be motivated and make them feel enthusiastic about their work. Over loading women employees with work will lead to frustration. It is not necessary that an employee who does her job well will continue to do so even if she is given more tasks. Failure to accomplish all the tasks leads to frustration and stress. Confusion about the roles and responsibilities should be clarified in order to avoid inter role conflicts. To avoid having heavy workload or lack of support overwhelm women employees and erode performance, it is essential for employers to develop robust workforce planning practices and processes. Therefore, the select IT companies should review how work is dispersed across teams and individuals to ensure that skills match work needs.
10. It is essential for select IT companies to understand what matters to women employees, and why and how these factors affect productivity and behaviour on the job. To reap the rewards of an engaged workforce and greater productivity, the select IT companies need to dig deeply to understand the most pressing pain points hindering sustainable engagement, which may include unmanageable workplace stress. By developing meaningful actions, the IT companies can make significant strides toward creating a healthy and productive work environment.

Conclusion

Work stress is the concept given much importance in any organization because it creates high impact on the individual performance and the overall performance of the organization. The study reveals that women employees in the IT companies have high work stress. The present study was conducted with a sample size of 300 women employees of three IT companies in Puducherry namely, Waysure Technologies, Roadmap IT Solutions and Zeuxine Technologies. The findings of this study show that there is no significant relationship among the acceptance levels of the respondents of different educational status groups, salary groups, varied tenure of experience and IT companies towards stress coping strategies of the IT companies. To ensure a positive outcome, attention to the factors identified in the suggested framework is important for reducing the work



stress of women employees in the IT sector.

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