



CAUSES AND IMPACT OF STRESS ON WOMEN EXECUTIVES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR IN INDIA

V. Vani* Dr. B. Naga Raju**

*Research Scholar in HRM, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Andhra Pradesh.

**Assistant Professor in Human Resource Management, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Andhra Pradesh.

Abstract

Stress is used in everyday vocabulary to capture a variety of human experiences that are disturbing or disruptive. The most common reasons are for wanting to work involved psychological and social gains. Clearly, people seek intrinsic rewards from their employment in addition to the traditional extrinsic outcomes viz., financial remuneration, promotion, security and status. Given the importance of work and the total numbers of hours spent in work by employed people, it is not surprising that it is a potential sources and site of significant stress.

Keywords: *Stress, Women, IT.*

Introduction

An interpersonal relationship is the nature of interaction that occurs between two or more people. People in an interpersonal relationship may interact overtly, covertly; face to face or even anonymously. Interpersonal relationships occur between people who fill each other's explicit or implicit physical or emotional needs in some way.

Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are the life skills that are being used every day to communicate and interact with other people, individually and in groups.

Interpersonal Skills include not only how we communicate with others, but also our confidence, and our ability to listen and understand. Problem solving, decision making and personal stress management are also considered interpersonal skills.

People with strong interpersonal skills are usually more successful in both their professional and personal lives. They are perceived as more clam, confident and charismatic, qualities that are often endearing or appealing to others. Being more aware of your interpersonal skills can help you improve and develop them.

Difference between Interpersonal Relationship and Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal relationship is the relationship between two or more persons. The relationship may be good or bad. But interpersonal skills are inborn characters and directly concerned to attitude. Only if their attitude permits they can and can perform well.

Review of Literature

The subjective sensations commonly experienced in conjunction with "feeling stressed" are headaches, loss of appetite and sleeping problems. There are also behavioral ways in which stress can manifest itself like crying, smoking, excessive drinking and decreased work performance (Ghuri and Gronhaug, 2005)1.

Rapid technological and social changes have created highly stress full lifestyles. Stress can lead to physical, psychological; and behavioral difficulties. Toda, in a rapidly- evolving and diverse society, work place changes occur virtually overnight. Many employees accept tension and disregard its long term effects: those who are aware of their tension levels may not cope effectively (Walcott-Mc Quigg, 1994)2.

Most adults spend about half of their waking lives in work related activates; therefore, work conditions significantly influence their health. When properly handled, work stress can be positive and energizing; however, overwhelming job stress can cause a staggering array of problems for individuals and organizations (Beehr and Newman, 1978; Brief et.al. 1981 Jean, 1993)3.

Any discussion of work stress must avoid making the impression that work is a psychologically, 'dangerous' activity as it is not necessarily inherently stressful. Indeed, the intrinsic value of work to the health and life satisfaction of the worker is well recognized (Probert, 1990)4. Early philosophers such as Freud and Adler contended that work forms an integral part of basic



human existence, In his well accepted theory of development, Erikson (1950)⁵ notes the importance of work to an individual's sense of selfhood.

Work is integrally involved in the process of identity development and self – esteem (Winefield, et.al. 1993)⁶. Work, therefore, plays a major role in people's lives and weilds an important influence on their sense of well- being and identity (Barling, 1990, Feather 1990)⁷. It provides a medium by which people identifies themselves in society and can be influenced by economic, societal, cultural and individual factors. A person's identity is a function of his or her validated social roles, particularly those associated with occupation. Consequently, the loss of such valued roles can lead to psychological distress and subsequent loss of function.

For many individuals, the loss of work has been associated with extremely negative reactions that include psychological or physiological distress, loss of social contact and suicide (Keita and Sauter, 1992; Marshall and Hodges, 1981; Winefield 1995)⁸. There is an interactive relationship between unemployment and a range of measures of poor health. In addition to loss of income, unemployment has been found to lead to a breakdown of social relationships and an increase in stress and anxiety, loneliness an depravation of social (Leeflang, et al. 1992)⁹, reduced social support, poor health, a higher incidence of handicap and chronic illness (Mackebach, 1992; Mathers, 1994)¹⁰.

In addition to reporting higher levels of psychological distress following prolonged periods of unemployment, the majority of unemployed people expressed a strong desire to work (Weiner, et.al. 1999)¹¹.

Research Gap

The research studies on sources and causes of stress, impact of stress on job performance and work-family –life balance and coping mechanisms of women employees were carried out in different types of organizations including education, banking, health, tourism, hospitality and information technology sectors.

But, there is no in-depth study carried out on interpersonal relationship, level of stress, impact of stress on interpersonal relationship and the impact of stress, Interpersonal relationship and job efficiency especially from women executives working at IT companies in Chennai.

Statement of the Problem

Stress appears to be a common denominator in the description of contributing factors to workplace violence. The companies downsize, reorganizing, reengineer, and demand more of each employee, stress levels increase to the breaking point, causing work related stress to escalate. High levels of tension are inherent in the aggressive behavior at work, including lack of cooperation, spreading rumors of gossip, arguing, belligerency and the use of offensive language. As the stress level increase so does the levels of aggression involving verbal threats, feeling of prosecution, sabotage, destruction of property, physical fights and the use of weapons.

Everyday interpersonal work relations may also breed hostility, aggressive behavior and high levels of tension. In addition to the competitive nature of work, other reasons for high stress are reported as: unreasonable expectations in work accomplishments about economic conditions, downsizing, mergers and layoffs.

Highly stressed workers have been found to be particularly prone to violence. Under continuous pressure and intimidation, they may reach a breaking point and retaliate to what they believe as unfair treatment. Contemporary technological business practices involving the use of computers to monitor employee productivity potentially add to the stress at work. In addition to the increasing speed of work demands, computers have resulted in a more alienated work environment. Overworked in a depersonalized work environment, many workers bottle up high levels of stress as a normal part of everyday work.

Mismanaged stress and accumulated tension do not go away overtime but become a potential threat for more damaging consequences. Stress management can be a cornerstone of violence prevention efforts in organizations. Identification of stress reducing factors has been noted as essential for risk management in violence prevention. Assessment of stress related factors such as work load, management style, economics, work environment and culture, and degree of support for prevention programmes can identify the stress levels experienced by the workers. Assisting employees to avoid high levels of tension can prevent an outburst of workplace violence.

Objectives of the Study

To examine the interpersonal relationship with reference to women executives in IT companies in Chennai City.
To identify the techniques/ strategies adopted by the women executives to cope up with stress.



Significance of the Study

The interpersonal relationship among women executives would be useful in understanding the organizational culture and human relationship among the women executives. The stress level of women executives would be helpful to identify the cause and stress levels of them. The effects of stress on interpersonal relationship would be useful to know the critical issues and its consequences in interpersonal relationships and job performance. The proper understanding of the coping techniques would be useful to identify the effectiveness and efficiency of those techniques and would pave the way to formulate and implement the optimal coping strategies which could have an impact on job satisfaction and retention of women executives.

Major Discussions: Findings and Suggestions

The results showed that about 43.30 per cent of women executives belong to the age group of 20-30 years followed by 41-50 years (25.40 per cent), 31-40 years (25.00 per cent) and more than 50 years (6.30 per cent).

It is clear that about 36.40 per cent belong to the income group of Rs.10001-15000 followed by Rs.5001-10000 (26.30 per cent), more than Rs.15000 (24.00 per cent) and less than Rs.5000 (13.30 per cent) it is apparent that about 62.30 per cent of women executives are permanently employed while the rest of 37.70 per cent women executives are temporally employed.

The organizational factors of career path in the organization is well-defined for every one with opportunities clearly specified, training is given in the organization to achieve advancement in the career, easy approach to the supervisors/Seniors is not possible because of gender difference, female senior will be more comfortable than male senior, appreciation for better work is not received from the seniors, Women's talents are underestimated, there is discrimination in the allocation of job for men and women, women are neglected in the official discussion, women have to pay twice the time than men to satisfy others about their talents, gossiping about women's advancement is more, harassment and exploitation by the male workers are often experienced, peer group men workers are not supportive to overcome the problems in the organization, child care center can be provided in the organization, to overcome the problems of child care, timing can be made flexible for the women employees which will help to overcome work family conflict and organizational policies on medical and maternity leave are not supportive for career advancement are agreed by women executives that these factors cause the stress among them.

Besides, the factors of many or all the seniors posts are occupied by men, problems of women are not understood by men seniors and encouragement, guidance for advancement is very less variables received the status of neutral by the women executives which lead to stress among themselves.

The family circumstances of sufficient care is not given to their children by their absence and their income is considered secondary by their family are strongly agreed while the family circumstances of career achievement or advancement is not appreciated by the family members, career development beyond their spouse's status is not encouraged, consoling their children is difficult if they spend more time on their job, in spite of any job commitment the expectation by the family members does not differ and their parents have not given the right direction for their career before their marriage are not agreed by women executives.

Suggestions

- In order to strengthen the interpersonal relationship both at work and life, proper work-life balance strategies should be practiced by women executives for balancing both work and family consequences besides peer mediation.
- It is also suggested that effective use of individual and organizational strategies may reduce the possibilities of stress among women executives. At the organizational level, pre and post departure training, language training, cross-cultural training are needed to be implemented and they should be regularly monitored and supported by the family and friends.
- It is also recommended that women executives are trying to come out of stressful situation by adopting coping strategies such as cultivating belief in self. Cultivating positive habits, promoting the norm of small family. Employees are offered a weekly, one-hour stress management session focusing on mental relaxation techniques, cognitive restructuring exercises and coping skills to handle stress, including work-related stress.
- An important component of stress management program is relaxation centers that are analogous to fitness centers. Therefore, the design strategy included support spaces such as meditation, exercise, and relaxation rooms. These rooms would provide employees with comfortable, stress-free venues to enhance creativity and productivity.
- Self Efficacy is an important factor to be determined. A well determined focus on Self evaluation will definitely reduce the unwanted expectation and reduces stress.



- Need to retain good friends and to share the stressful situations to reduce the stress and to avoid the friends who always discourage each and every activity.
- Learn to forgive the others, accept the fact that this is an imperfect world and need to adjust. Get free the mind from negative energy by forgiving and moving on in order to reduce the stress.
- Refuse to accept the added responsibilities if it is beyond to your limits.
- Try to avoid over imagination for the peaceful life.

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