



IMPACT OF STRESS RELATED HEALTH ISSUES AND STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG PROFESSIONALS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

Work-life balance refers to the level of prioritization between personal and professional activities in an individual's life and the level to which activities related to their job are present in the home. A survey of 581 IT professionals was carried out. It is evaluated on eight sub scales ----- job commitment and stress, organizational stressors, employee inter-relationship, interpersonal stressors, work to family spill over, stress related health issues, stress programmes given by organization, stress management. The study is an attempt to analyze the impact of stress related health issues and stress management among professionals of Information Technology

Keywords: Information Technology (IT).

Introduction

Stress is an inescapable fact of life. Stress is defined as "a state of psychological and physiological imbalance resulting from the disparity between situational demand and the individual's ability and motivation to meet those needs". Stress is good when the situation offers an opportunity to a person to gain something. It acts as a motivator for peak performance. Stress is negative when a person faces social, physical, organizational and emotional problems. Stress arises when individuals perceive a discrepancy between the physical or psychological demands of a situation and the resources of his or her biological, psychological or social systems. Stress can be easily managed by following the stress programmes offered by IT sector as well as some of the management techniques have to be followed by professionals in IT sector.

Objectives of The Study

Following are the objectives of the study

1. To comprehend stress programmes given by IT Sector.
2. To empathize stress management techniques follow by professionals in IT Sector.

Review of The Literature

Following are the various studies conducted to find the Stress related health issues, stress programmes given by IT sector and Stress management technique follow by IT professionals.

AMY Joyce (1998) deliberated "Meditation rooms offer employees a refuge from stresses of the work place", speaks about stress as, stress can cause a lot of physical symptoms, It can increase allergy symptoms and blood pressure and cause stomach problems, among other things. And when you have high stress at work, it can spill over into the home. Stress also causes a decrease in productivity; it's hard to focus on the job when you're focusing on the stress. The phone is ringing, bosses are hovering and the deadline is just about here. You can't prioritize, your muscles are tense, and all you can think about is how awful it all is. If only you could escape, maybe you could get it all together. The National Safety Council estimates that 1 million employees are absent on an average workday because of stress-related problems. The World Health Organization described job stress as a "worldwide epidemic." A 1992 United Nations report called job stress "the 20th century disease." In 1973, almost 40% of workers reported being "extremely satisfied" with their jobs. Today, fewer than 25% fall into that category, according to the American Institute of Stress.

Dan Hasson (2005) speaks about stress as "Stress Management interventions and Predictors of long-term health", Stress in relation to biological, individual, societal conditions, is a thrill field to study. A stressor is a factor that contributes to a physiological or mental stress reaction. Anything can be stressor for an individual and it may be so for different reasons. It can be everything from hormonal changes to various kinds of mental, emotional, physical, psychological, and environmental and socio economic challenges.

Dr. S. Sankari & Ms. R. Subha (2007) in their journal on "stress among IT professionals" Experienced stress in life is the host, it is also the process that mediates, makes and mars health and illness, peace and happiness and propels the individual towards skepticism and stressed interaction with 'self' and 'others'. Stress is an external pressure, which is brought to bear upon the individual of signs and symptom that invariably include anxiety. Effects of stress are felt in all walks of human life.



Work stress is a high predictor of psychological symptoms in addition to life events. IT professionals face lot of stress in their day to day life. They face many physical illness and psychological disturbances.

Jake Messersmith (2007) have articulated in “Managing Work life conflict among Information Technology workers”, As organizations continue to emphasize information technology (IT) to help them compete, IT professionals are being asked to overcome a growing list of challenges. This unrelenting emphasis on IT initiatives often results in longer working hours and around-the-clock support, placing IT workers at risk of suffering from work-life conflict. Human resource managers must skillfully manage this issue, with a particular focus on mitigating the consequences associated with work-life conflict.

Guna Seelan Rethinam, Maimunah Ismail (2008) in their descriptive research titled “Constructs of Quality of Work Life: A Perspective of Information and Technology Professionals” aimed to understand the quality of work life balance as IT industries in many developing countries such as Malaysia are experiencing tremendous challenges in meeting the employment market demand. A good human resource practice would encourage IT professionals to be more productive while enjoying their work. Organizations are able to identify ways and means to improve the approach in minimizing the adverse impact of changes in work environments pertaining to Quality of work life.

Norbert Rego (2010) has deliberated “How to maintain work-life balance”, Times of India News gives views as, Today, and technology not just makes your life easy and simple, but also brings a work-life balance. There are many working couples, who constantly stay connected on mobile Internet- using email, social networking websites. There are many working couples who leave their infants in the hands of a nanny. With people spending more time at work, the demand for customized security systems and automation solutions is on the rise. Designers of intelligent home security systems are turning for a complete automated home system to maximize technological efficiencies.

Baral and Bhargava (2011) in their article entitled “HR interventions for work-life balance: evidences from organizations in India”, understood that work-life balance has become an increasingly pervasive concern for employers as well as employees. Employers being the advocates of setting norms and conditions at the workplace are considered to be the facilitators of combining work and family of employees. Critical analysis of the history and growth of employment policies in India suggest that WLBP have their roots in the statutory and voluntary welfare practices offered by many employers during and post industrialization era. Provisions such as working hour regulations, maternity benefits, crèches, and leave policies have received continued attention in government-mandated provisions. Government’s intervention to protect employees from exploitative workplace terms and conditions made by employers and in some cases employers’ pragmatic concerns for their employees’ health, safety and welfare can be considered as the major reasons behind introduction of such policies.

ReimaraValk and Vasanthi Srinivasan (2011) in their article “Work–family balance of Indian women software professionals: A qualitative study”, this study attempts to understand how work and family related factors influence the work–family balance of Indian women IT professionals. Study is based on an exploratory qualitative study of 13 women IT professionals in the software sector in Bangalore, India. The narratives reveal six major themes: (1) familial influences on life choices; (2) multi-role responsibilities and attempts to negotiate them; (3) self and professional identity; (4) work-life challenges and coping strategies; (5) organizational policies and practices; and (6) social support. While some of the findings in this study are supported by existing literature in the field, the dominant role of the family in the Indian context is of particular significance. One of the key implications for organizations is the need for human resource (HR) departments to design and implement policies that enable women to balance their work and personal lives in a manner that is sculpted within the family lives of the women rather than as a standalone policy.

Saurabh R Shrivatsava, Prateek S Bhobate (2012) made a detail study on “Computer related health problems among software professionals in Mumbai”, Aim of the study is to estimate the prevalence of various health problems among the software professionals and to study its association with their working environmental conditions. A cross-sectional study of four months duration was undertaken with 200 software professionals working with a private firm as subjects. Zung’s self rating depression scale and Hamilton’s depression rating scale and snellen’s – jaeger’s chart was used. Analysis was done by SPSS 17. Researchers conclude that a computer has become an epitome of modern life, being used in every aspect of life. This has also ushered in a new genre of occupation-related health problem. Ocular discomfort, muscle-skeletal disorders and psycho-social problems form key category of health problems found among constant computer users. Use of antiglare screen, cushioned chairs, and soft keypads had resulted in lowered health problems; application of ergonomics in working environment is must. There is also an immediate need to sensitize the management of the organizations employing computer professionals about their problem and enforce suitable preventive measures.



TS Vidyasagar (2013) have outlined “India needs to exploit nutraceuticals”, aimed to understand the Global demand for nutraceuticals (functional foods used in preventive healthcare) is about \$60bn and mainly comes from developed countries. These products are used for weight loss, stress management, anti-oxidants, memory enhancement, aphrodisiacs and anti-arthritis. About 70% of such products originate in Europe, 20% in China and 5% in India while the rest of the countries contribute 5%. Hence, there is tremendous scope for India, which is a natural home to such products since ancient times, to develop and promote herbal and medicinal plants as nutraceuticals.

Tasmayee Laha Roy (2013) have advocated “Companies organizing stress busting courses for employees to increase productivity” states that stressed, depressed while well dressed is the profile of every second corporate employee. With growing stress employers are giving attention to comprehensive competency development and personal development for their employees to increase productivity. Fitness and training institutes servicing this need have grown at a phenomenal in the previous one year. Tapping the presence of both corporate, especially IT employees and IT companies.

Sri Ram (2014) Survey says that “Indian employers rank stress number one lifestyle risk factor”, Indian employers are ahead of their Asia Pacific counterparts in developing strategies to manage work-related stress as one in every three employers instituted stress management programmes last year and an almost equal number plan to do so this year, According to the inaugural Asia Pacific edition of the 'Staying at Work' survey conducted by professional services company Towers Watson, stress is the number one life style risk factor, ranking above physical inactivity and obesity. Almost 1 in every 3 Indian employers has instituted stress or resilience management programmes in 2013 and an almost equal number plan to follow suit in 2014. With stress being ranked as 1 lifestyle risk factor in India, this number is likely to grow," the report said.

Help guide.org (2015) in this article titled “Preventing Burnout”, help guide gives a best way to prevent from stress and its suggestions are if constant stress has you feeling disillusioned, helpless, and completely worn out, you may be suffering from burnout. When you're burned out, problems seem insurmountable, everything looks bleak, and it's difficult to muster up the energy to care—let alone do something about your situation. The unhappiness and detachment burnout causes can threaten your job, your relationships, and your health. But burnout can be healed. You can regain your balance by reassessing priorities, making time for yourself, and seeking support.

KDV Prasad, Rajesh Vaidya, V Anil Kumar (2016) in their article “A Comparative Analysis: Causes of Stress Among The Employees And Its Effect on The Performance At The Workplace In Agricultural Research And Information Technology Sectors”, The objective of the study is to present the main sources of stress in ARS and ITS and if there are any differences in stress variables among the Agricultural Research Sector and Information Technology Sector and how do they influence employees performance in both the sectors. A sample size of 150 from the employees of IT sector companies around the Hyderabad Metro, Telangana, India. The research instrument used for the survey is a structured undisguised questionnaire. The Likert-type scale with items 1-5 was used the reliability statistic Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was calculated to test the internal consistency of the instrument. The Statistical Analytical System (SAS) was used to measure the central tendency, measures of variability, and dispersion for the analysis. The Correlation analysis and parametric statistics like t test and F-tests for comparison and to arrive at the conclusions. The study suggest that IT sector employee are more affected due to workload, role overload, career, organizational climate, lack of job control, and in particular job insecurity. It is observed women will have more stress because of their dual roles working and taking the responsibility of the family at home – role conflict. Proper strategies need to be developed considering working on flexible hours, interpersonal relationship and supervision and participation of the employees in the stress management may be helpful to cope the stressors.

Sweta Rajan-Rankin (November 26 2017), in her article “Abuse and stress: Study on Indian BPO workers pulls off mask”, the study is based on ethnographic research with two global outsourcing firms operating call centre in India from 2010-12. In 2012, an estimated 3.3 lakh Indians worked in call centres which provide customer-related services, second only to the Philippines, which had 3.5 lakh such employees. To help employees take on a westernized identity, many are sent to the US where they are trained in voice modulation and accents, as well on cultural reference points, such as baseball or film and TV shows like Baywatch and Friends. They face a lot of health issues, including increased stress and increase in weight. Employees taking to substance abuse to cope with the stress or to stay awake through the night, their usual work hours. The study noted that there was exploitation, abuse and emotional harm; it also looked at the creativity and imagination involved in making identity manipulation work. Some employees said they did not let go off their new identities, even after office hours.

Research Gap

It is observed from the above reviews and which helps the researcher to find the following research gap. Not much emphasis has been given on program writers and not shown much importance on causes of disease due to stress among Information technology professionals. These research gaps have been identified which helps for further research.

Table Showing Summary of Findings

Name of the Author	Year	Name of the Journal	Aim	Findings
AMY Joyce	1998	Washington Post	Meditation rooms offer employees a refuge from stresses of the work place”,	Maximum number of workers reported being "extremely satisfied" with their jobs according to the American Institute of Stress.
Dan Hasson	2005	Uppsala University	Stress Management interventions and Predictors of long-term health	A stressor is a factor that contributes to a physiological or mental stress reaction.
Dr. S. Sankari & Ms. R. Subha	2007	Cauvery Research Journal	Stress among IT professionals	IT professionals face lot of stress in their day to day life. They face many physical illness and psychological disturbances
JAKE MESSERSMITH	2007	Wiley Periodicals Human Resource Management	Managing Work life conflict among Information Technology workers	Human resource managers must skillfully manage the issue, with a particular focus on mitigating the consequences associated with work-life conflict
GunaSeelan Rethinam, Maimunah Ismail	2008	European Journal of Social Sciences	Quality of work life balance as IT industries in many developing countries	A good human resource practice would encourage IT professionals to be more productive while enjoying their work
Norbert Rego	2010	Times of India	How to maintain work-life balance	Technology not just makes your life easy and simple, but also brings a work-life balance.
Baral and Bhargava	2011	International Journal of Business, Management and Social Sciences,	HR interventions for work-life balance: evidences from organizations in India	Work-life balance has become an increasingly pervasive concern for employers as well as employees
ReimaraValk and Vasanthi Srinivasan	2011	Indian Institute of Management	work and family related factors influence the work-family balance of Indian women IT professionals	One of the key implications for organizations is the need for human resource (HR) departments to design and implement policies that enable women to balance their work and personal lives in a manner that is sculpted within the family lives of the women rather than as a standalone policy
Saurabh R Shrivatsava, Prateek S Bhubate	2012	Human Resource Management	The prevalence of various health problems among the software professionals and to study its association with their working environmental conditions	Use of antiglare screen, cushioned chairs, and soft keypads had resulted in lowered health problems; application of ergonomics in working environment is must
TS Vidyasagar	2013	The Economic Times	Global demand for nutraceuticals	Develop and promote herbal and medicinal plants as nutraceuticals.
Tasmayee Laha Roy	2013	The Economic Times	Companies organizing stress busting courses for employees to increase productivity	Stress employers are giving attention to comprehensive competency development and personal development for their employees to increase productivity
Sri Ram	2014	Economic Times	Indian employers rank stress number one lifestyle risk factor	Stress being ranked as 1 lifestyle risk factor in India, this number is likely to grow,

Help guide.org	2015	Help guide	Preventing Burnout	Regain your balance by reassessing priorities, making time for yourself, and seeking support
KDV Prasad, Rajesh Vaidya, V Anil Kumar	2016	Journal of Management & Research	identify the causes of stress and its effect on performance at their workplace among the AR and IT Sectors	IT sector employee are more affected due to workload, role overload, career, organizational climate, lack of job control, and in particular job insecurity
Sweta Rajan	2017	The Hindu, Business Line	Abuse and stress: Study on Indian BPO workers pulls off mask	There was exploitation, abuse and emotional harm

Conclusion

The present study is an attempt to identify the various health issues and coping strategies of IT professionals in IT sector. IT professionals face lot of stress in their day to day life. They face many physical illness and psychological disturbances. Stress is a common word used by most of the people who are working in IT sector. As per the study, stress is unavoidable. Prolonged tension will be the cause for stress. Even though management offers various programmes for stress management, the real situation is, IT professionals do not have time to follow the programmes because of over load of work and unrealistic target within short time of period. Stress and stress related health issues cannot be completely solved but it can be managed by various management programmes and techniques like Health maintenance programme in the organization like gym facilities, Leadership training programs, counseling & listening to employees problems and celebrating social functions in the office premises.

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