A STUDY TO DETERMINE LEVELS OF STRESS IN EMPLOYEES IN IT SECTOR- NEED FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Organizations are constantly undergoing change through new demands, changing technology, demographic changes and increased competition. Due to the increase in workload, psychological problems related to occupational stress have increased rapidly. Job stress has become a hazard to the health of employees and in turn the health of organizations The purpose of this research paper is to study the levels of stress in employees of IT industry and illustrate the overall importance of stress management in the workplace.

Keywords: *Stress management, stress, IT Sector*

Introduction

Information Technology (IT) is termed as designing, developing, implementing and managing of computer-based information systems. It has two main elements software applications and computer hardware. In present times, there has been massive growth in the computer and varied related technology. The biggest players of IT include IBM, HP, Dell and Microsoft.

The Information Technology-Enabled Services (ITES) industry provides services which are made available over telecom or data network to a wide ambit of external business areas. Branches of such business process outsourcing (BPO) include customer service, web-content development, back office management and network consultancy to name a few. IT sector have shown tremendous growth in terms of income and has become one of the leading sector of massive employment opportunities. The industry has added nearly 230,000 jobs in FY2012 and hence provided jobs to 2.8 million . Also, it is means of indirect employment and thus have pooled opportunities to 8.9 million people. IT sector is dominant in global outsourcing sector. It faces huge competition from various countries. However two main

cities are major contributor to the chunk of IT companies- Bangalore and Mumbai. Seeing widespread growth of this sector, there arises a strong need to constantly support the employees and make measures to decrease their stress levels, as major portion of India's economy depends on it. Of late, it has been observed that IT employees have major stress related problems.

Chart Showing Growth Of It Sector
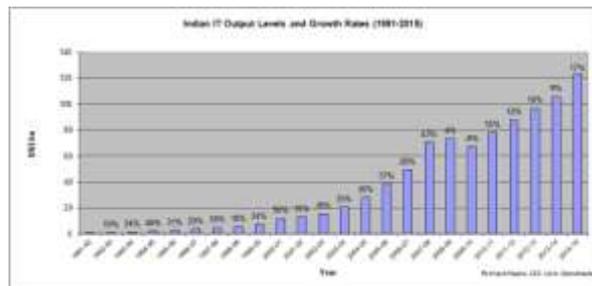
Reasons for Growth of It/ Ites Companies:

- Low operating costs and tax benefit.
- Favorable government policies.
- Technically qualified personnel easily available in the country.

As per the Economic Survey 2011-12, the IT/ITES industries have contributed 7.96 lakh jobs in a year, 2011. As per the reports of NASSCOM, employee base in the rural areas is expected to increase by over 10 times in the near future.

According to a customer poll conducted by Booz and Co, India is the favoured destination for engineering off shoring; the trend being that Indian companies encourage foreign companies to offshore complete product responsibility to them.

Hyderabad is fastest growing hub for IT/ITES of India. Big companies such as Infosys, TCS, Genpact, Deloitte, Face book, Bank of America, Thomson Reuters, Amazon, Google, Cognizant, and Franklin Templeton among others are expanding their horizons in the state. According to Andhra Pradesh Government's estimates, the total IT/ITES sector hiring is rapidly increasing.

However, the increased profits and resultant targets have given rise to the stress levels in the employees. Although stress levels in IT companies are similar to those in other sectors but it requires more attention owing to sector's remarkable growth. Due to changing and competitive work environment, stress levels are increasing in both workers and managers. As a result of work pressure, employees are showing more signs of depression and chronic fatigue.

Nature of Stress

Stress is defined as response to an external situation which results in physical, psychological, and/or behavioral deviations for employees. It is the individual's physical, mental and chemical reactions to the circumstances that frighten, confuse, endanger or irritates. It is the employees' reaction to the disturbing environment and hence leads to:

a) Physiological discomfort.

b) Some kind of emotional unhappiness.

c) Strained relationships with other people.

Stress is very individualistic in nature. For each individual, there is an optimum level of stress under which he /she performs fully. If the stress experienced is below the level, the employee may feel boredom in the job and motivation to work will deteriorate. On the other hand, if the stress levels are too high then it leads to adverse effects on the performance. However, optimum stress level is the one which leads to high energy, high motivation, high involvement, high performance and good health. Therefore, companies should aim to have that set of circumstances which lead to optimum stress level. It will lead to more productivity, higher efficiency and high profits coupled with healthy job environment.

Distress experienced by individuals has negative consequences for them, for their families and the organizations they work in. The stress levels can be illustrated as:

Stress Level	Low Stress	Optimum Stress	High Stress
Reactions	Boredom	High energy	Exhaustion
Behaviors	Low motivation, carelessness. Psychological withdrawal	High motivation. Heightened perception. High involvement	Anxiety. Nervousness. Indecisiveness.
Performance	Low	High	Poor
Health effects	Dull health	Good health	Insomnia, Psychomatic illnesses.

It Industry and Stress

IT sector is emerging at a faster pace and is further contributing massively for the employment opportunities. However, the work culture in IT/ITES sector mainly involves long job timings, leaving the employees at times with the risk of depression, stress and anxiety. Since IT professionals are more achievement oriented, they do not have much of a social life and the time spent with family is also less. There is also lack of recreation and opportunities to relax, and all these may lead to frustration and eventually depression. High work pressure, long hours in front of the computer and a fast-paced lifestyle, if these factors

team up to weaken your physical health, here is one more strong reason why they are simply unhealthy: mental health professionals are now convinced that an increasing number of persons working in the IT and IT-enabled services sector fall prey to depression, because of the high stress they undergo. Changing technologies and the urgency of IT-related tasks result in IT professionals needing to be more accessible than employees in many other industries. While IT talent must cope with a great deal of pressure, they can also take great pride that these demands reflect how valuable and worthy asset their work is to an organization.

Objectives:

The research paper has been undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To determine the levels of stress in employees in IT/ITES sector.
2. To determine the need for stress management.

Methodology:

The research was done with the help of primary data. The primary data was collected with the help of questionnaires filled up by employees of various IT/ITES companies For example: Infosys, Dell, Wipro etc. The questionnaire related to conditions at work, affect of job on emotional /physical wellbeing, deadlines stress, difficulty in expression, job and personal life, recognition and rewards etc. Total 50 respondents have been selected in the age group of 18-34, 34-49 n above 50. The secondary data was collected from books, journals and websites. The collected data was analyzed using percentages and tables.

Interpretation:

Table-1 Age-*Wps Cross-Tabulation

STRESS LEVEL	WPS(2.00) LOW	WPS(3.00) MODERATE	WPS(4.00) SEVERE	WPS(5.00) HIGHLY SEVERE	TOTAL
AGE(18-34)	2	23	6	1	32
(35-49)	0	6	7	5	18
TOTAL	2	29	13	6	50

* WPS-Work place stress

Table 1 shows that correlation of workplace stress with the age. Levels of stress have been interpreted on the scale of (2-5). Also no one falls in the category of 1 which means chilled out or calm approach. However, people in the age group of (35-49) fall more in severe and highly severe stress levels.

Table-2 Chi-Square Tests

	VALUE	df	Asymp.sig(2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	**11.707**	**3**	**.008**
Likelihood ratio	12.421	3	.006
Linear by linear	11.380	1	.001***
No. of variables	50		

Table 2 shows that the workplace stress (*age) represents highly significant results.

Table-3 Gender-*Wps Cross-Tabulation

Stress Level	Wps(2.00) Low	Wps(3.00) Moderate	Wps(4.00) Severe	Wps(5.00) Highly Severe	Total
Gender - Male	0	14	8	4	26
Female	2	15	5	2	24
Total	2	29	13	6	50

Table -3 shows correlation of workplace stress with the gender. It represents that females fall more in moderate levels of stress and males fall more into severe levels of stress.

Findings & Suggestions

1. The findings suggest that people of higher age (35-49) with top positions fall more in the severe levels of stress.

2. Also stress levels of males are higher than the females.

3. Stress reduction techniques should be implemented more. For example- Yogic session and Self empowerment programmes.

4. Most of the employees feel lack of independence for several matters. Therefore, efforts must be made to continuously check the delegation of authority and matters thereto.

5. Although stress in itself is difficult to define, the feeling of having little control is always distressful. Companies must increase the counseling sessions of the employees

6. Efforts must be initiated to do anything that will enable them to gain more control over their daily activities and become more self empowered socially, professionally and spiritually.

7. Personality of a person is the dominating factor which influences his response.. Therefore, efforts must be continuously made by the companies to have a qualified psychologist and counselors at the disposal of the employees.

8. Companies must make a flexible plan to adjust as per employees needs and should make efforts to have more and more personal wellness programmes for the employees.

Directions for Future Research

The IT sector provides a lot of scope to future researchers. It is comparatively a challenging area for Indian researchers. The robustness of the key empirical findings in this study for future can be verified by virtue of large sample size, longer time span, refined measures of the existing variable.

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