

A study on occupational stress among IT employees working in Coimbatore district

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ABSTRACT

Stress can seriously affect the mind and body irrespective of profession. In the present scenario software industry has become one of the fastest growing industries in India. The reason for choosing particularly software industry and employees is that the level of stress these employees face is comparatively higher than other employees. Any kind of a job has targets and an employee becomes stressed when he or she is allotted with unachievable targets and are unable to manage the given situation. Thus, the main aim of this article is to bring to lime light the level of stress with software employees in Coimbatore and the total sample size for the study is 136 chosen by simple random sampling method in Coimbatore district.

KEY WORDS: STRESS, IT, LIFE

Introduction to HRM

Human Resource Management is the organizational function that deals with issues related to people such as compensation, hiring, performance management, organization development, safety, wellness, benefits, employee motivation, communication, administration, and training. HRM is also a strategic and comprehensive approach to managing people and the workplace culture and environment. Effective HRM enables employees to contribute effectively and productively to the overall company direction and the accomplishment of the organization's goals and objectives.

The Human Resource Management (HRM) function includes a variety of activities, and key

among them is responsibility for human resources- for deciding what staffing needs you have and whether to use independent contractors or hire employees to fill these needs, recruiting and training the best employees, ensuring they are high performers, dealing with performance issues, and ensuring your personnel and management practices conform to various regulations. Activities also include managing the approach to employee benefits and compensation, employee records and personnel policies. Usually small businesses (for-profit or non-profit have to carry out these activities themselves because they can't yet afford part- or full-time help. However, they should always ensure that employees have -and are aware of -personnel policies which conform to current regulations. These policies are often in the form of employee manuals, which all employees have.

Introduction to stress

Stress refers to the responses, body and mind must the demands placed on them which is a normal part of life and a normal part of any job. Without stress, one would not meet deadlines, strive to hit sales or production targets, or line up new clients. Meeting the demands and challenges of a job is part of what makes work interesting and satisfying, and it is often what allows people to develop new skills and advance in their careers. In the workplace, people regularly experience stress-causing situations, react to them with heightened tension, and then return to a more relaxed state when the crisis, big or small, is resolved. However, problems occur when stress is so overwhelming or constant that the tension never abates and one can never get to relax.

Stress is a psychological and physiological response to events that upset a person's personal balance in some way. When faced with a threat, whether to physical safety or emotional equilibrium, the body's defences kick into high gear in a rapid, automatic process known as the 'fight-or-flight' response. It is well known, what this stress response feels like: heart pounding in the chest, muscles tensing up, breath coming faster, every sense on red alert. According to the American Medical Association, Stress is defined as "Any interference that disturbs a person's mental or physical well-being."

Stress is the debilitating effects caused by constant pressure both at work and home are modern phenomenon. However, stress or at least temporary stress, is a very necessary part of our life. One important function of short term stress is to channel our resources to deal with challenging or even life-threatening situations. Stress is a common problem that affects almost all of us at same point in our lives. Stress is the body's reaction to a change that requires a physical, mental or emotional adjustment or response. Stress can come from any situation or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, nervous, or even anxious. Stress is caused by an existing stress – causing factor or stressor. Stress is defined as an organism's total response to environmental demands or pressures. When stress was first studied in the 1950s, the term was used to denote both the causes and the experienced effects of these pressures. More recently, however, the word stressor has been used for the stimulus that provoke a stress response. One recurrent disagreement among researches concerns the definition of stress in humans. Stress in human

results from interactions between persons and their environment that are perceived as straining or exceeding their adaptive capacities and threatening their well-being. The element of perception indicates that human stress responses reflect differences in personality, as well as differences in physical strength or general health.

Stress is the way that you feel when pressure is placed on you. A little bit of pressure can be productive, give you motivation, and help you to perform better at something. However, too much pressure or prolonged pressure can lead to stress, which is unhealthy for the mind and body.

Factors relating to the job

- workload (overload and under load)
- pace / variety / meaningfulness of work
- autonomy (e.g., the ability to make your own decisions about our own job or about specific tasks)
- shift work / hours of work
- skills / abilities do not match job demands
- lack of training and/or preparation (technical and social)
- lack of appreciation
- physical environment (noise, air quality, etc)
- isolation at the workplace (emotional or working alone)

Factors affecting the Role in the organization

- role conflict (conflicting job demands, multiple supervisors/managers)
- role ambiguity (lack of clarity about responsibilities, expectations, etc)
- level of responsibility

Factors relating to Career development

- under/over-promotion
- job security (fear of redundancy either from economy, or a lack of tasks or work to do)
- career development opportunities
- overall job satisfaction

Factors relating to Interpersonal relationships at work

- supervisors (conflicts or lack of support)
- co-workers (conflicts or lack of support)
- subordinates
- threat of violence, harassment, etc (threats to personal safety)

- lack of trust
- lack of systems in workplace available to report and deal with unacceptable behavior

Factors relating to Organizational structure/climate

- participation (or non-participation) in decision-making
- management style
- communication patterns (poor communication / information flow)
- lack of systems in workplace available to respond to concerns
- not engaging employees when undergoing organizational change
- lack of perceived fairness (who gets what when, and the processes through which decisions are made). Feelings of unfairness magnify the effects of perceived stress on health.

Personal factors

- role/responsibility conflicts
- family exposed to work-related hazards

Review of literature

Dr. K. Krishnamurthy and Mr. S. Prabakaran (2015), in their study revealed that stress has become common among the working people in this era because of the competitiveness, job complexity, advanced technologies and various other reasons. People at the beginning of their career, who are trying to establish themselves, often experience stress. Various factors relating to stress impact of stress in the family, work and individual, management of stress factors and organizational health factors. The aged employees are having more stress factors relating to stress factors organizational personal health and psychological. Female employees are highly affected the stress factors in their work, health and they are more emotional in nature.

Maria Melchion and Jenny (2009) have given their views on “Sickness absence, from work predicts worker’s risk of later depression”. They comment on participants who were studied were executives from the natural gas and Electricity Company. Required data (sickness absence) was obtained and assessed. The baseline for study on factors of age, gender, marital status, occupational grade, tobacco smoking, alcohol consumption, depressive symptoms and work stress were analyzed.

Amita Singh (2010) has expressed WLB on “The perception of work-life balance policies, among software professionals”. He expressed that unbalanced work life relationship, can result in reduced health and low performance outcomes for individuals, families and organizations. A distorted life and work is prevalent among the software professionals. Therefore, a study had been made to assess their policies importance, attitude etc.

Thirumaleswari, T (2013) stated that “A Study on Job Stress among Employees of Software

Industries in Chennai". In the present scenario software industry has become one of the fastest growing industries in India. The reason for choosing particularly software industry and employees is that the level of stress these employees face is comparatively higher than other employees.

Dixita Dhanesha (2014), in her article she profound that as a result of globalization, the Indian economy has been growing rapidly since 1990s. Due to which particularly, the services sector has undergone a high growth rate, especially in the information technology enabled services (ITES) and business process outsourcing (BPO) sectors. So, the employers in this organization are increasing day by day. And there is a need for every employee to understand the nature of their work in the organisation and act accordingly. But, in this attempt the employee undergoes a lot of troubles, which in turn leads to increased stress and nervousness. Stress is not an illness- it is a state. In human, stress generally describes a positive state or a negative state that can impact the person's physical and mental condition. And therefore, the employees are struggling a lot to work under such increased pressure and hectic situation.

A brief review of the studies by **De, R (2004)** made in this area in the Indian context is presented here. Based on a sample survey of BPO employees (n=475), it was reported that more than 64 % of the employees under the study felt that the appraisal system in BPOs was transparent and slightly fewer than 59% felt that it was good and more than 65% gave thumbs up for the incentives and felt that the efforts were recognized at the time of appraisal.

A study by **Rani, S, Mahalingam, T.V (2003)** was based on a sample survey of BPO employees (n=544) across the country, it was found that the satisfaction levels of ITES employees was 83% and it was reported that BPO is a sector which applies metrics in every facet of marketing and this metrics and pressure have become the causes of the stress.

Based on a sample survey by **Babu, P.R. (2004)** of 277 call centre employees, it was opined that the performance of the employees was linked with the incentives and the yearly increments. And the act of linking performance of the employees with their incentives resulted in continuous stress of the employees.

In a Survey conducted by **Shivani, (2007)** it was the observed that the performance appraisal in BPO sector, in which the employees were given ratings based on their performance, was many a times given without any proper preparation for the session. As this rating determines whether the employee is eligible for promotion or not, this increased the stress levels of the employees. And it was opined that sometimes, these sorts of activities may demotivate the employees.

A performance appraisal is a regular periodic and predefined process which determines the performance of a particular employee and his productivity in contact with the predefined organizational aims and objectives. In **2008**, a study from **Bhaduri, A** on the performance appraisal system being practiced by the foreign MNC BPO sectors operating in India indicated that, not all the employees of the firm were satisfied with the appraisal system. And if one wants to be free from stress, he has to be clear with the performance management system of the organization and it was also opined that, every manager should be clearly trained to give accurate feedback of his team members and also to coach them and train them in the respective areas.

Objectives of the study

- To identify the stress symptoms among the employees.
- To suggest possible measures to prevent the stress among the employees in BPO.

Research methodology

Research methodology is the overall design or blue print of how a research would be conducted. This study uses a descriptive research approach to measure various attributes of the population under study pertaining to BPO Industries in Coimbatore. It follows survey techniques using a structured questionnaire. In this study the primary data used were those that were got from the informal discussion and the questionnaire. In this study for collecting primary data, the employees of BPO Companies Coimbatore is used. The target population for the study comprised nearly thousands of employees working in BPO companies in Coimbatore, Tamilnadu. A sample of 200 respondents were chosen to collect primary data. But out of 200 respondents only 136 respondents were filled in the questioner and the others were rejected as incomplete questioner. Based on the above reviews given by various authors, the following tests are used for data analysis. Simple Percentage Analysis, Frequency tables, T- Test, ANOVA

Analysis and interpretation**DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS:**

The Descriptive procedure displays univariate summary statistics for several variables in a single table and calculates standardized values (z scores).

TABLE 1: Stress symptoms of the respondents.

Stress Symptoms	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Depressed	3	5	4.49	0.64	1
Increased consumption of tobacco/ alcohol	3	5	4.47	0.68	2
Angry	3	5	4.40	0.72	3
Poor Sleep patterns	3	5	4.33	0.77	4
Headaches, Aches & Pains	3	5	4.32	0.78	5
Indigestion	2	4	3.27	0.84	6
Throat/Voice problem	2	4	3.02	0.69	7
Irritated	2	4	2.88	0.79	8
High Blood pressure	2	4	2.71	0.82	9
Ear/Eye problem	1	3	1.73	0.79	10

Inference

It is noticed that most of the respondents are 'Depressed' (Mean: 4.49) and it is in the first place among other symptoms of stress. 'Increased consumption of tobacco/alcohol' (Mean: 4.47) seems to be in the second place, 'Angry'(Mean: 4.40) is in the third place, 'Poor Sleep patterns' (Mean: 4.33) is in the fourth place, 'Headaches, Aches & Pains'(Mean: 4.32) is in the fifth place that respondents are experiencing, 'Indigestion' (Mean: 3.27) is in the sixth place, 'Throat/Voice problem'(Mean: 3.02) is in the seventh place, 'Irritated'(Mean: 2.88) is in the eighth place, 'High Blood pressure' (Mean: 2.71) is in the ninth place and 'Ear/Eye problem' (Mean: 1.73) is in the tenth place.

TABLE 2: Factors of Stress among the respondents.

Factors of Stress	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
Lack of management support	3	5	4.13	0.64	1
Bullying behavior from managers/ staff/ workers	3	5	3.89	0.59	2
Lack of participation in decision making	3	4	3.77	0.42	3
Harassment by managers/ staff/ workers	2	4	3.49	0.71	4
Dealing with co-workers	3	5	3.47	0.72	5
Insufficient Leave	2	4	3.34	0.80	6
Need to hit targets/deadlines	3	4	3.29	0.45	7
Long working hours	2	4	2.89	0.87	8
Night Shifts	2	4	2.88	0.75	9
Lack of Training provided to deal with the foreign clients.	1	3	2.06	0.80	10

Inference

It is noticed that most of the respondents are 'Lack of management support' (Mean: 4.13) and it is in the first place among other symptoms of stress. 'Bullying behavior from managers/ staff/ workers' (Mean: 3.89) seems to be in the second place, 'Lack of participation in decision making'(Mean: 3.77) is in the third place, 'Harassment by managers/ staff/ workers' (Mean: 3.49) is in the fourth place, 'Dealing with co-workers'(Mean: 3.47) is in the fifth place that respondents are experiencing, 'Insufficient Leave' (Mean: 3.34) is in the sixth place, 'Need to hit targets/deadlines'(Mean: 3.29) is in the seventh place, 'Long working hours'(Mean: 2.89) is in the eighth place, 'Night Shifts' (Mean: 2.88) is in the ninth place and 'Lack of Training provided to deal with the foreign clients.' (Mean: 2.06) is in the tenth place.

TABLE 3: Manage Stress of the respondents.

Managing Stress	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
I check my chair and VDU is adjusted correctly.	4	5	4.67	0.47	1
Keeping the team informed of the happenings in the organization.	4	5	4.66	0.47	2
Doing simple stretching exercise in between work.	4	5	4.41	0.49	3
I like suggestion for improvement from others	4	5	4.41	0.49	
Encourage the team to review and organize their work.	4	5	4.41	0.49	
Taking short breaks frequently	3	5	4.01	0.76	4
I approach deadlines calmly	3	5	3.91	0.80	5
Take interest in life outside work also	3	4	3.42	0.50	6
Clearly communicating the objective to the team.	2	4	2.60	0.69	7
Available to talk when needed.	2	3	2.54	0.50	8

Inference

It is noticed that most of the respondents are 'I check my chair and VDU is adjusted correctly.' (Mean: 4.67) and it is in the first place among other symptoms of stress. 'Keeping the team informed of the happenings in the organization.' (Mean: 4.66) seems to be in the second place, 'Doing simple stretching exercise in between work.', 'I like suggestion for improvement from others' and 'Encourage the team to review and organize their work.' (Mean: 4.41) is in the third place, 'Taking short breaks frequently' (Mean: 4.01) is in the fourth place, 'I approach deadlines calmly' (Mean: 3.91) is in the fifth place that respondents are experiencing, 'Take interest in life outside work also' (Mean: 3.42) is in the sixth place, 'Clearly communicating the objective to the team.' (Mean: 2.60) is in the seventh place and 'Available to talk when needed.' (Mean: 2.54) is in the eighth place.

Findings and conclusion

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

STRESS SYMPTOMS:

- It is concluded that most of the respondents are 'Depressed' (Mean: 4.49) and it is in the first place among other symptoms of stress.
- It is concluded that the respondents faces 'Increased consumption of tobacco/alcohol' (Mean: 4.47) and it is in the second place among other symptoms of stress,
- It is concluded that the respondents faces 'Angry'(Mean: 4.40) and is in the third place among other symptoms of stress.
- It is concluded that the respondents faces 'Poor Sleep patterns' (Mean: 4.33) and is in the fourth place among other symptoms of stress,
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Headaches, Aches & Pains'(Mean: 4.32) and is in the fifth place among other symptoms of stress
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Indigestion' (Mean: 3.27) and is in the sixth place among other symptoms of stress
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Throat/Voice problem'(Mean: 3.02) and is in the seventh place among other symptoms of stress
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Irritated'(Mean: 2.88) and is in the eighth place among other symptoms of stress
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'High Blood pressure' (Mean: 2.71) and is in the ninth place among other symptoms of stress
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Ear/Eye problem' (Mean: 1.73) and is in the tenth place among other symptoms of stress.

FACTORS CAUSING STRESS:

- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Lack of management support' (Mean: 4.13) and it is in the first place among other factors causing stress.
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Bullying behavior from managers/ staff/ workers' (Mean: 3.89) and seems to be in the second place among other factors causing stress.
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Lack of participation in decision making' (Mean: 3.77) and is in the third place among other factors causing stress.
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Harassment by managers/ staff/ workers' (Mean: 3.49) and is in the fourth place among other factors causing stress.

- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Dealing with co-workers' (Mean: 3.47) and is in the fifth place that respondents are experiencing among other factors causing stress.
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Insufficient Leave' (Mean: 3.34) and is in the sixth place among other factors causing stress.
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Need to hit targets/deadlines' (Mean: 3.29) and is in the seventh place among other factors causing stress.
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Long working hours' (Mean: 2.89) and is in the eighth place among other factors causing stress.
- It is concluded that the respondents experiences 'Night Shifts' (Mean: 2.88) and is in the ninth place among other factors causing stress.
- It is concluded that the respondent experiences 'Lack of Training provided to deal with the foreign clients.' (Mean: 2.06) and is in the tenth place among other factors causing stress.

MANAGE STRESS:

- It is concluded that the respondent manage stress by 'I check my chair and VDU is adjusted correctly.' (Mean: 4.67) and it is in the first place among other factors of managing of stress.
- It is concluded that the respondent manage stress by 'Keeping the team informed of the happenings in the organization.' (Mean: 4.66) and seems to be in the second place among other factors of managing of stress.
- It is concluded that the respondent manage stress by 'Doing simple stretching exercise in between work.', 'I like suggestion for improvement from others' and 'Encourage the team to review and organize their work.' (Mean: 4.41) and is in the third place among other factors of managing of stress.
- It is concluded that the respondent manage stress by 'Taking short breaks frequently' (Mean: 4.01) and is in the fourth place among other factors of managing of stress.
- It is concluded that the respondent manage stress by 'I approach deadlines calmly' (Mean: 3.91) and is in the fifth place that respondents are experiencing among other factors of managing of stress.
- It is concluded that the respondent manage stress by 'Take interest in life outside work also' (Mean: 3.42) and is in the sixth place among other factors of managing of stress.
- It is concluded that the respondent manage stress by 'Clearly communicating the objective to the team.' (Mean: 2.60) and is in the seventh place among other factors of managing of stress.
- It is concluded that the respondent manage stress by 'Available to talk when needed.' (Mean: 2.54) and is in the eighth place among other factors of managing of stress.

SUGGESTIONS

- The result of this study says that 'Depression', 'Increased consumption of tobacco/alcohol', 'Angry', 'Poor Sleep patterns' and 'Headaches, Aches & Pains' are the stress symptoms seen in most of the respondents.
- To reduce these symptoms, the respondents and the employer can take steps like increasing the break hours, weekend recreation activities can be added and can arrange for picnic or tours.
- Most of the respondents says that the main factor causing stress in working environment is 'Lack of management support', 'Bullying behavior from managers/ staff/ workers', 'Lack of participation in decision making', 'Harassment by managers/ staff/ workers' and 'Dealing with co-workers'.
- To reduce these causes of stress in working atmosphere, management should take steps to be transparent in framing policies, provide opportunities to participate in decision making, reduce harassment and provide training to deal with the coworkers.
- Most of the respondents prefer 'I check my chair and VDU is adjusted correctly', 'Keeping the team informed of the happenings in the organization', 'Doing simple stretching exercise in between work', 'I like suggestion for improvement from others' and 'Encourage the team to review and organize their work' to manage stress.
- Organization should take necessary steps to increase the factors to manage stress.

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