IN THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY, A STUDY OF STRESS AND ITS MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT:

Employee stress is becoming a major issue in the IT sector due to the fierce competition. Employees are frequently forced to quit the organization in the middle due to the pressure to perform at all costs, which adds to the company's costs. Every firm invests a significant amount of money in training its employees, which may be squandered if they leave abruptly. There is no way out of the current situation to make the sector stress-free. This type of strain is only going to get worse as technology and new age services become more widely used. As a result, rather than avoiding the issue, the industry has opted to confront it. As a result, the current article attempted to highlight several stress-reduction strategies used by IT businesses to combat this problem.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the onset of globalization and the opening up of the economy in the 1990s, the Information Technology industry saw an unparalleled rise all over the world. This boom had a wide-ranging influence on society's social, economic, educational, cultural, and developmental elements. The speed with which the changes were thrown at an unprepared IT industry left little room for adaptation. This resulted in stress on and off the field.

As businesses embrace the ‘New Economy,' a slew of new information and communication technologies and software solutions emerge, all of which aim to improve a company's competitive edge, whether by providing value or lowering the costs associated with activities and processes. As a result, many businesses have increased their investments in information and communication technology in order to improve the efficiency and efficacy of their inter- and intra-organizational business systems and processes (Irani & Love, 2002). However, according to Baldwin et al. (2001) and Currie (1998), some businesses have chosen a less engaging business approach and attempted to outsource their

reliance on IT (IT). As IT professionals fight for status inside businesses, this has increased the strain on them. Many organizations have been expecting more (i.e. longer working hours) from their IT staff without a matching rise in compensation, according to Gartner (2001). Employee retention has been highlighted as a key issue when it comes to not being able to take a vacation or having it cut short due to IT issues (Gartner, 2001).

As information systems (IS) become the fabric that connects business processes together, organizations' use and reliance on IT continues to expand (Moore, 2000). However, as businesses adapt their business strategies, particularly their IT strategies, to changes in the outside world, IT personnel are frequently faced with increased user demands, role ambiguity, role conflict, and work overload. Much of this pressure stems from active or passive downsizing and/or re-structuring initiatives, as well as the supply-demand gap for IT experts (Bartol & Martin, 1982; Bartol & Martin, 1982; Bartol & Martin, 1982; Bartol & Martin, 1982; Bartol & Martin, 1982; Bartol & Martin, 1982; Bartol

Guimaraes and Igbaria, 1992; Li and Shani, 1991; McGee, 1996; Sethi et al., 1999; Moore, 2000). Ivancevich et al., 1983; Guimaraes and Igbaria, 1992; Li and Shani, 1991; McGee, 1996; Sethi et al., 1999; Moore, 2000). Boundary bridging, according to Baroudi (1985) and Guimaraes and Igbaria (1992), is a contributing factor to role conflict and ambiguity among IT employees. The changing nature of work and the inherent uncertainties in the business environment, according to Cartwright and Cooper (1996), are the major drivers of stress among IT professionals. Workplace stress is described as an inability to cope with the demands of one's employment (Rees, 1997). Stress, on the other hand, is defined by Lazarus and Launier (1978) as any internal or external demand that exceeds an individual's typical adaptive resources. Until now, it has been widely assumed that work-related stress is a cause of physical and mental illnesses. The consequences can be far-reaching, leading to organizational effects such as absenteeism and decreased productivity (Ganster, 1991; Cartwright, 2000). However, stress does not impact everyone in the same way. Some people thrive on stress (known as eustress in its positive version) and so appear to cope better with it than others. The way a person handles stress influences how they will be influenced by the stress (Billings et al. 2000). Despite the fact that IT

professionals are prone to high levels of stress, coping has gotten little attention in the IS literature (Haung, 2001).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's society, stress is a big emotional issue. Stress is becoming a worldwide problem that affects all types of employees. Stress is widely seen as a bad and unwelcome emotional component. Stress may be divided into three categories: negative, positive, and neutral. Distress is the result of negative stress. Anxiety, tension, worry, strain, fear, wrath, hatred, and so on are examples of negative emotions. This has to be calmed down. Confusion and frustration are common symptoms of this sort of stress. Positive stress is both exhilarating and difficult. Emotions are felt in demanding occupations, advancements, friendship, the possibility of effectively dealing with an unforeseen circumstance, and so on, and are referred to as eustress, which is the polar opposite of distress.

Mental stress can be caused by everyday occurrences such as a work change, a small sickness, performance goals to meet, or even an unexpected visit from the boss to the house. Varied persons have different levels of stress tolerance, both in terms of severity and length. Optimal stress levels result in good performance and motivation, as well as work satisfaction. Stress levels that are higher than they should be have negative physical and emotional repercussions. Physical implications include frequent absences from work, whereas emotional costs include accidents, disputes, interpersonal relationship issues, and so on.

The causes of stress and their link with physical disease have been investigated using a number of factors. The goal of the current study's literature review is to emphasize the many variables in connection to stress. According to Kahn et al. (1964), stress is an environmental factor that has a negative impact on individuals. Stress, according to Mechanic (1970), is a state in which normal functioning is disturbed. The stimulus dimension (Appley & Trumbell, 1967) or the response dimension (Appley & Trumbell, 1967) have been used to explain psychological stress (most clinical studies). Chronic tiredness, tension, concern, physical damage, neurological breakdown, and other conditions that cause an individual to be unable to respond properly or instrumentally to environmental

stimuli or to respond only at the expense of severe wear and tear on the body are examples of stress.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate the stress and coping conceptual framework.
2. To determine the levels of workplace stress and the coping methods used by IT personnel.
3. To investigate the impact of secondary factors on workplace stress and coping methods.
4. To investigate the link between workplace stress and coping strategies.
5. Make recommendations for stress-relieving methods.

3.1 HYPOTHESES FOR THE STUDY

The following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

1. IT workers are more stressed than other workers.
2. IT professionals use a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with stress.
3. There is a strong link between work stress and the coping techniques used.
4. Demographic factors have a major impact on workplace stress and coping.
5. Workplace stress and coping methods are heavily influenced by the family environment.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE:

The participants in this study came from a variety of IT organizations. The study enlisted the participation of 600 workers from a variety of companies. In order to choose the sample, a stratified random sampling approach was used. The bulk of the 600 people that responded are in the 20-40 year old age range. Male respondents were found to be more numerous as compared to female respondents. The bulk of them were also discovered to be single. Graduates were found to be in greater numbers when the educational levels were considered.

Table 1.1

Showing distribution of the sample by gender and managerial positions

Gender	Positions						Total	
	Top Level		Middle Level		Lower Level			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Male	36	90%	127	82.5%	313	77.1%	476	79.3%
Female	4	10%	27	17.5%	93	22.9%	124	20.7%
Total	40	100	154	100	406	100	600	100

3.2 RESEARCH TOOLS:

Following tools were employed in the present study:

- Personal data sheet
- The Occupational Stress Index by Srivastava and Singh (1984)
- Coping Check List by Rao, *et al.*(1990)

Table 1.2.

Showing the Selection of Tools

Sl.No	Tools	Variables Measured
1	The Occupational Stress Index by Srivastava and Singh (1974)	Occupational Stress (12 subscales)
2	Coping Check List by Rao, *et al.* (1990)	Coping (8 coping strategies)

4. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Occupational Stress was found to be moderate across the board for the entire group. All subscales of stress, such as role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, responsibility for persons, under participation,

powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions, and unpredictability, had no significance in the entire sample.

4.1 Stress Effects of Independent Variables:

• Managerial levels were found to have a substantial impact on occupational stress subscales such as personal responsibility, under involvement, helplessness, and bad peer connections. Top-level executives were substantially more stressed in the area of "personal responsibility" than medium and lower-level employees. In comparison to the other two groups, lower level employees were more stressed in the areas of helplessness and under-participation. On subscales of stress, however, such as role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, unreasonable group and political pressure, intrinsic impoverishment, poor status, hard working conditions, and unprofitability, the impact of management level on stress was not identified.

• Educational attainment had an impact on occupational stress in subscales such as role conflict, personal responsibility, under-participation, helplessness, and intrinsic poverty. Diploma holders were more stressed than graduates and postgraduates in areas such as role conflict, under involvement, and helplessness. Role overload, role ambiguity, excessive group and political pressure, bad peer relations, low status, hard working circumstances, and unprofitability were all shown to have no effect on occupational stress.

a. Age has an impact on stress in areas such as personal responsibility, lack of engagement, and helplessness. In all of these stress subscales, employees in the age range 26-40 were shown to be more stressed than the other two groups. The other subscales, however, were unaffected by age.

b. It was also discovered that the family environment had a substantial impact on overall stress, as it was on most of the subscales. It was also found that employees who described their home environment as

The stress subscales of role overload, under involvement, powerlessness, intrinsic poverty, and poor status were all higher on the ‘average' scale.

c. Gender had a substantial impact on stress subscales such as personal responsibility, under involvement, and powerlessness. Men were more stressed than women in the area of "personal responsibility." In areas such as under involvement and helplessness, women were more stressed than males.

d. Marital status had an impact on stress subscales such as inappropriate group and political pressure, personal responsibility, under involvement, and helplessness. It was also discovered that married workers were more stressed than unmarried employees in the areas of unjustified group and political pressure, personal responsibility, and involvement under duress.

4.2 Adaptation:

The following findings were derived from the 8 coping strategies that were entered into the equation using stepwise multiple regression analysis, with stress ratings as dependents and coping mechanisms as independents. Only four of the eight coping methods accurately predicted employee occupational stress. Unproductive coping mechanisms (CCL7), spiritual religious coping (CCL3), healthy cognitive mechanisms (CCL1), and bad coping practices are the four types of coping strategies (CCL6). Unproductive coping method was the first and most important predictor to predict stress, with a correlation coefficient of.411 and a contribution of 16.9%, followed by spiritual religious coping with a correlation value of.455 and a contribution of 20.7 percent. Healthy cognitive systems were the third variable to be factored into the equation.

with CCL7 and CCL3, with a correlation value of.463 and a 21.4 percent contribution Healthy coping mechanism, along with CCL7, CCL3, and CCL1, was the penultimate and last coping mechanism to enter the equation, with a correlation value of.469 and a total contribution of 22.0 percent. The rest of the stress-related contribution went unaccounted for. The remaining four coping mechanisms – social support coping, physical activity-related coping, problem-solving coping, and high-risk coping – did not predict employee occupational stress and were excluded from the equation.

Stress is insidiously harming the finest and brightest, according to an article by Shobha John (Times of India, 8th March 2003). Given the punishing deadlines, demanding bosses, and long work hours, it's not surprising that a survey conducted by Achal Bhagat of the NGO Saarthak among 30 companies found that 50% of employees had stress in some form, 20% had depression, and 30% had problems such as alcoholism, marital discord, and so on. ‘This was more obvious in start-ups or mergers,' Bhagat adds. The corporation's reaction is as follows: Bhagat claims that when he presented his results to corporations, they were met with rejection. Workshops and staff training programs are great, he adds, as long as they are done on a regular basis. ‘‘Corporate should recognize that stressed-out employees have a negative impact on the company's financial line. Instead than inviting their workers to play golf, people should listen to their concerns." Increased collaboration between corporations and hospitals, on the other hand, might help to alleviate the situation.

“When we're in charge of our emotions, we can correctly express our trust, empathy, and confidence,” said Dr. Jeanne Segal (2008) in her book ‘The Language of Emotional Intelligence: The Five Essential Tools for Building Powerful and Effective Relationships.' When we lose control, we spiral into a state of uncertainty, sadness, and doubt. Learn how to regulate your emotions and enhance communication in all of your relationships, giving your emotional intelligence a huge boost. Emotional intelligence is the capacity to effectively control and use one's emotions in a good and productive manner, allowing one to be more assertive and successful. It's about interacting with others in ways that entice others to follow you. Emotional intelligence also includes the ability to recognize your own emotional state as well as the emotional states of others, as well as the ability to make decisions about how you interact with all of the key people in your life. Managers and leaders have a significant competitive advantage.”

Lower-level employees are shown to have higher ratings on the subscales of helplessness and under involvement. At the initial level, IT personnel undertake more technical work, and as they advance in their careers, they do more management work than technical labor. As a result, lower-level employees discover that their occupations do not allow them to participate in decision-making, leading to a sense of helplessness. Middle-level employees are more stressed on subscale "bad peer relations" because they take on management duties, which most of them are not particularly capable at, and because they come from technical backgrounds with little or no experience of managing elements. They must be

increasingly accountable as they advance in their careers since they are liable not just for their own acts but also for the activities of their subordinates. While some stress is unavoidable, excessive stress lowers your productivity and negatively impacts your physical and mental health. As a result, it's critical to figure out how to keep it under control. In the workplace, the capacity to manage stress might be the difference between success and failure.

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