Research Reviews on Stress among working women in IT field

Tharini Ramanathan[*], Ramanathan Mohan[**], Ganesh Rajendran[**]

Abstract- Today IT workplace stress is becoming a major issue and a matter of concern for the employees and the organizations. It has become a part of life for the women employees, as life today has become so complex at home as well as outside that it is impossible to avoid stress. Selye [1936] defines stress as "a dynamic activity wherein an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand"

Index Terms- Stress, IT

I. INTRODUCTION

Indian families are undergoing rapid changes due to the increased pace of urbanization and modernization. Indian women belonging to all classes have entered into paid occupations. At the present time, Indian women's exposure to educational opportunities is substantially higher than it was some decades ago, especially in the urban setting. This has opened new vistas, increased awareness and raised aspirations of personal growth. This, along with economic pressure, has been instrumental in influencing women's decision to enter the work force. Most studies of employed married women in India have reported economic need as being the primary reason given for working.

Women's employment outside the home generally has a positive rather than negative effect on marriage. Campbell*et al.* studied the effects of family life on women's job performance and work attitudes. The result revealed that women with children were significantly lower in occupational commitment relative to women without children; contrary to expectation, women with younger children outperformed women with older children. Makowska studied psychosocial determinants of stress and well-being among working women. The significance of the work-related stressors was evidently greater than that of the stressors associated with the family function, although the relationship between family functioning, stress and well-being was also significant.

II. MULTIPLE ROLES AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

Super identified six common life roles. He indicated that the need to balance these different roles simultaneously is a reality for most individuals at various stages throughout their lives. Rather than following a transitional sequence from one role to another, women are required to perform an accumulation of disparate roles simultaneously, each one with its unique pressures. Multiple role-playing has been found to have both positive and negative effects on the mental health and well-being of professional women. In certain instances, women with multiple roles reported better physical and psychological health than women with less role involvement. In other words, they cherished motivational stimulation, self-esteem, a sense of control, physical stamina, and bursts of energy. However, multiple roles have also been found to cause a variety of adverse effects on women's mental and physical health, including loss of appetite, insomnia, overindulgence, and back pains.

III. IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH IN STRESS

An increasing number of articles have promoted the importance of work–life balance. This highlights the current concern within society and organizations about the impact of multiple roles on the health and well-being of professional women and its implications regarding work and family performance, and women's role in society. The following variables influencing the experience of work–life balance were identified while reviewing the international literature.

a. The multiple roles performed by women

b. Role strain experienced because of multiple roles, i.e., role conflict and role overload

c. Organization culture and work dynamics: Organizational values supporting work–life balance have positive work and personal well-being consequences

d. Personal resources and social support: Several studies confirmed the positive relationship between personalities, emotional support and well-being

e. Career orientation and career stage in which women careers need to be viewed in the context of their life course and time lines

f. Coping and coping strategies: Women use both emotional and problem-focused coping strategies to deal with role conflict.

IV. STUDIES AND FINDINGS – REVIEWS

Som Mittal, President, NASSCOM, holds that gender inclusivity is a must for the long-term success of industry. "India will play a

key role in future transformation... Women are a key and vital part of our workforce, and industry will continue to work towards creating a conducive environment and attract more women employees and leaders." Workplace diversity in industry gives it a leading edge in the marketplace, and is therefore of even greater importance in these times of economic recession and slowdown. Gender inclusivity is no longer corporate social responsibility but a business imperative.

Cleo Thompson, Gender Advisory Council, Global HC, PriceWaterhouse Coopers, observes that in 2010, 60% of graduates across America, Asia and Europe will be women. Placing this huge pool of talented women in leadership roles will improve the return of investor capital, the quality of the end product, and the corporate bottom line. Harnessing the power of talented women "will pave the way for future generations".

N Krishnakumar, CEO, MindTree Ltd, believes that "building business is not just a man's job. Women helped build up MindTree" as a force to reckon with globally. It is wrong to think that transformation can be effected by men alone. He cites the case of Xerox, where an all-women top management team recently collaborated to transform the company.

Ambitions are changing in today's world. Educated women are now coming in larger numbers from tier II cities and smaller towns across India. These women, with their personal drive, integrity and capacity to manage conflict positively, can build value for stakeholders in a business enterprise. Employing women, in the words of N Krishnakumar, is a "smart business decision". Women should not expect concessions but demand their rights as valuable contributors to enterprise, he feels.
Shankar Annaswamy, Managing Director, IBM India, believes that business innovations will make the key difference in surviving the impending financial tsunami. "We are way behind the rest of the world," says Pramod Bhasin, President and CEO, Genpact. The talent pool of qualified women professionals must be effectively tapped to strengthen industry and the economy. In India, only about 25% of the business leadership is comprised of women. In China, on the other hand, women comprise nearly 60% of the business leadership. "The glass ceiling exists. We have to break it visibly and rock the boat to make things change." Women as innovators bring value to enterprise in a rapidly changing world

This study also found that overall, women ascribe greater importance to True innovation is not about commanding, but getting people to feel comfortable about change," says Sharad Sharma, CEO (R&D) Yahoo India. Today, metaphors for leadership are changing. With more information available than ever before, today's business leaders can no longer claim access to privileged information. Today's business leader is like a masterful coach coaxing the best performance from an average team. The role of an enlightened parent may perhaps be the future metaphor for leadership. The leader should not instruct, but engage the hearts and minds of the team; draw out their passion and leverage their strengths.

Women have a natural adaptability and capacity for change. Today, talent is only a good starting point. You need to make something out of that talent. It takes study and persistence to build skills and then become an expert and adaptive change agent. Women may have this natural ability but they need to be motivated and build a positive self-image, says Sharma. "Faith in oneself is a major turning point for innovation and change."

Nancy Thomas, Vice-President, IBM Global Business Services, holds that diversity of background and ideas are key drivers of innovation. Stereotypes such as the glass ceiling are barriers to innovation. In today's business environment, innovation is of great importance and is much more than a product offering. Today, the rest of the world, and mature markets, are eager to hear about growth countries such as India and of the innovations that drive this growth. Acknowledging the value and potential of women as innovators, IBM encourages more women to earn patents on processes they have formulated.

Women are traditionally stereotyped as collaborative consensus-builders ready to take the backseat. Nancy Thomas urges women to "learn when to stop consensus-building and make decisions for the team. Building credibility and authority is vital for leadership. Cultural factors do restrain women. But the real glass ceiling is the one we put upon ourselves. We women are our own barriers. Women must hone their capacity to handle opportunities and embrace them".

Accenture undertook research for One Step Ahead of 2011: A New Horizon for Working Women to gain a better understanding of how prepared women and men feel to meet the challenges of the multi-polar world, a phenomenon in which traditional centres of economic power are being dispersed more widely around the globe. For this study, 4,100 business professionals from medium to large organisations in 17 countries were surveyed online between December 2007 and January 2008.

The study found some striking differences among individual countries. Professionals of both genders in several key emerging markets were more likely to say they felt equipped than were their counterparts in developed markets. The majority of respondents in India, China and Brazil -- 70%, 68% and 58% respectively -- said they felt equipped to succeed in the global business world of 2011. On the other hand, respondents in the UK and France were least likely and indicate greater readiness for a number of key skill areas than men do. Specifically, they express a heightened propensity to cultivate skills related to inclusion and diversity, social responsibility and global skills. According to the report, technology is the skill that women overall deem most important to success in the future, and the one they are most willing to embrace as an enabler of new business models.

"The current economic crisis shows how interconnected we are," says Rekha M Menon, Executive Vice-President, Accenture India. "Innovation can come from anywhere. Our study shows that women in emerging markets report better readiness to face the future." Gender diversity influences organisational

effectiveness. Corporates with more women in top leadership clearly can face changes and innovate, and therefore perform better. Yet, women are clearly behind in certain key areas of effectiveness at the workplace. Accenture globally encourages women to hold patents for their innovations, Menon adds, as one of the many ways to encourage and nurture the talents of women.

NASSCOM-Mercer study on women in IT and BPO

This six-week study of 40 organisations, with special emphasis on technology shows, in the words of Padma Ravichander, MD, Mercer (India), that "we are travelling beyond inclusivity towards empowerment". The report shows how gender inclusivity has its own rewards for an enterprise. Adequate representation of women in the workforce enhances creativity, productivity and the ability to manage change. The study shows the paradox of more women being recruited at the entry level, but fewer remaining in the workforce and progressing towards the top positions.

There is a talent leakage in middle management levels among women in their thirties. Marriage, family, children, relocation and other personal reasons diminish women's ability to reach the top. Support systems are required for women at work. Current measures such as crèches, flexi-time, refresher programmes, orientation on company policies only scratch the surface of the real problems.

However, there is increased awareness of the contribution of women and the need to nurture their talent at the workplace. Leadership paradigms are changing in the 21st century.

V. CONCLUSION

Future directions

It is critical for work and family research to fully understand the conditions under which the married women employees experience conflict between their roles. There is a need to consider working environment, job satisfaction, family support and number of working hours in the future research. Future studies should also continue to refine the methodology used in the area of work–family research. In order to attain in-depth understanding of one's work and family life, researchers who study work–family roles should include multiple perspectives such as job stress, quality of life, mental health, and work demands. In addition, it is necessary to explore multiple waves of data collection over a longer period of time to better understand the changing nature of work family roles over time. Longitudinal studies need to be conducted to examine how the stages of life (e.g., marriage, child birth, and child rearing) affect work and family concerns. It is clear from the current study that married women employees indeed experience WFC while attempting to balance their work and family lives. Thus, organizations need to formulate guidelines for the management of WFCs since they are related to job satisfaction and performance of the employees.

Like all studies, the current research has limitations. The sample in the present study is quite small; hence, the generalization of the findings is limited. Additional research is needed in other employment settings to explore the relationship between WFC and quality of life among married women employees.

REFERENCES

HTTP://WWW.MEDICINENET.COM/STRESS/ARTICLE.HTM

AZIZ M. ORGANIZATIONAL ROLE STRESS AMONG INDIAN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONALS. ASIAN PACIFIC NEWSLETTER ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY. 2003;10(2):31–33.

BHATIA P, KUMAR P. PART II – CLINICAL APPLICATIONS AND GUIDELINES. 2005;11(4):711–717. [PUBMED]

ABSTRACTINTRODUCTIONMETHODSRESULTS AND DISCUSSIONDISCUSSIONCONCLUSIONFOOTNOTESREFERENCES

HTTP://PSYCHCENTRAL.COM/BLOG/ARCHIVES/2013/03/10/WHY-ARE-WOMEN-SO-STRESSED-IN-THE-WORKPLACE/

HTTP://WWW.PSYCHOLOGY.ORG.AU/ASSETS/FILES/STRESSTIPSHEET.PDF

HTTP://WWW.MEDICINENET.COM/STRESS/ARTICLE.HTM

HTTP://PSYCHCENTRAL.COM/BLOG/ARCHIVES/2013/03/10/WHY-ARE-WOMEN-SO-STRESSED-IN-THE-WORKPLACE/

HTTP://WWW.PSYCHOLOGY.ORG.AU/ASSETS/FILES/STRESSTIPSHEET.PDF

AUTHORS

First Author – Tharini R.S, BE, MBA, Advanced Information Security Analyst and bavatharini24@gmail.com.
Second Author – Ramanathan M, BE, MBA, Former Middleware Consultant and raum79@gmail.com
Third Author – Ganesh R, BE, MBA, Oracle Database Consultant and ganesh.presales@gmail.com.

Correspondence Author – Tharini R.S, Advanced Information Security Analyst, 9442547812