



A study on gender related stress factors and coping strategies

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General Note



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ABSTRACT

Life is full of challenges, targets, responsibilities, commitments and what not - irrespective of the positions you are in. A man has to meet out all these things within his capacity and gender is not a barrier in this. Ultimately to face this challenging modern globalised world one need to have lot of confidence, good attitude, and should be self sufficient. But one major factor to be successful – what is termed as Stress (though there are different perceptions about it). Though many researchers have proved that stress is essential for the success of a person, there is also a danger of various health hazards towards it. Another important factor that strikes everyone is - Do men and women share the same level of stress when it comes to job? Biologically women are considered to be weaker section in the society. But gone are those days when it comes to challenges. Many examples can be quoted about successful women who are sharing their space when it comes to career. The paper aims at bringing out gender related issues with regard to stress and this has been studied at CMC Computers Limited – Chennai.

Keywords: Stress; Job Stress; Gender issues; coping strategies.

Abbreviations: BPO - Business process outsourcing; R & D - Research & Development.

Uma Mageswari S and Prabhu NRV,

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1. INTRODUCTION

Stress affects not only our physical health but our mental well being, too. To successfully manage stress in everyday lives, individual can learn to relax and enjoy life. The best way to manage stress is to prevent it. This may not be always possible. So, the next best things are to reduce stress and make life easier. Stress refers to any environmental, organizational and individual or internal demands, which require the individual to readjust the usual behavior pattern. Degree of stress results from events or situations that have potential to cause change. Stimuli or situations that can result in the experience of stress are called stressors. There are three major sources of stress- environmental, individual and organizational.

Environmental stress is not only caused by the factors intrinsic to job, but also influenced by the environmental or extra organizational factors. Stress results because of the individual's interaction with environmental stimuli or factors such as societal or technological changes, political and economical uncertainties, financial condition, community conditions etc. The stress which an individual experiences in an environment is carried with him in another environment also, thus increasing the stress and causing stress to others also.

There are many factors at the level of individual which may be generated in the context of organizational life or his personal life like life and career change, personality types, role characteristics. Any change in career life of an individual puts him in disequilibrium state of affairs and he is required to bring equilibrium. In this process individual experiences stress. Personality type / characteristic such as authoritarianism, rigidity, masculinity, femininity, extroversion, spontaneity, locus of control are particularly relevant to individual stress. When people become members of several system like family, voluntary organization, work organization etc., they are expected to fulfill certain obligations to each system and to fit into defined places in the system. These various roles may have conflicting demands and people experiences role stress as they are not able to fulfill the conflicting demands or requirements.

It is interesting to note that, stress has two faces. It is a good servant, but a bad master. In other words, it can be one's best friend or worst enemy. A certain amount of stress is necessary to achieve success, but undue stress causes distress. Although we tend to think of stress as caused by external events, events in themselves are not stressful. Rather it is the way in which an individual interpret and react to events that makes them stressful. Stress is received by different people differently. If two people experience the same amount stress or pressure, one may take it as positive or healthy types or the other may accept it as negative. Stress is often referred to as having negative connotation. The calamitous consequences of stress can affect an individual in three ways *i.e.* physiological, psychological and behavioral.

1.1. CMS computers Ltd

The Information technology industry in India has gained a brand identity as a knowledge economy due to its IT and ITES sector. The IT-ITES industry has two major components: IT Services and business process outsourcing (BPO). The growth in the service sector in India has been led by the IT-ITES sector, contributing substantially to increase in GDP, employment, and exports.

CMS Computers Ltd. started as Computer Maintenance and Services Company in 1976. Today CMS Computers Limited operates as IT solutions & services company and is involved in technology solutions consulting and services, business system integration and services for transport system, including road traffic signals automation and intelligent transport management. CMS also provides solutions in the field of electronic and security system, manufacturing kiosks, card printing and card personalization and offering maintenance services for technology solutions, peripherals and accessories to corporate clients. CMS has varied skills to provide cost effective solutions to the customer in different industry segments and has a strong hold on domestic client base having many of its clients as Corporates, Government companies and PSU's.

Operating from 8 branch locations and 80 support centers, it supports over 500 customers nationally. CMS computers has its R&D center with over 100 personnel's involved in Research & Development developing custom products such as EDM, Kiosk, Security, EMS &Traffic systems. CMS is also actively engaged in Software development with over 100 professionals for its technology products. CMS's profound understanding of the IT industry permit clients to tackle problems related to their business and its unrivaled IT technology offers the ability and potential to satisfy clients' needs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

From time immemorial gender issues has always been debatable. There was a time wherein women were not allowed to have any privileges in life. In due course of time and with the efforts of various reformers the situation has changed. Now women share their space equivalent with men. Following are some reviews by various authors on gender issues with regard to organizational stress. Stress places physical demands on the human body and mind often resulting in detrimental consequences. Stress irritants individual, organizational, and societal health and produces significant economic impact on individuals and organizations (Danna and Griffm, 1999).

A survey of workers in various industries conducted jointly by International Communications Research, the American Society of Chartered Life Underwriters and Chartered Financial Consultants, and the Ethics Officer Association noted 88% of respondents reporting physical and psychological reactions to workplace pressure with insomnia, headaches, depression, weight changes, and panic attacks being the top complaints in order of frequency (Boyd, 1997).

Roxburgh (1996) posed two possible explanations for the apparent higher levels of psychological distress among women in relation to work: (a) There are no gender differences in the degree of exposure to workplace stressors, but women are more vulnerable to the effects of stress; or (b) women are exposed to a greater magnitude of work stress than men. The question of biology versus environment continues to be loaded with controversy as stakeholders with conflicting agendas take an interest in potential outcomes. While these questions offer an intriguing baseline for discussion, other researchers (Barling, 1996; Parker & Griffin, 2002) offer more complex models.

An environment of differentiated treatment and hostility can be detrimental to all employees' well-being and quality of life. Few studies have examined the effect of workplace hostility toward women as it impacts employees who are not targets, but merely observers, of this behavior (Miner-Rubino and Cortina, 2004).

The gendered conditions of work, whether an environment is male dominated, female-dominated, or gender-integrated, also appear to have a significant impact on outcomes such as job satisfaction and psychological distress. Therefore, it is important not only to examine differences between gender responses to stress but also the gender dynamics of the environment (Bond et al., 2004).

Nelson (2000) highlights the differing perceptions among male CEOs and senior female managers regarding obstacles to women's advancement in the organization. Men cited the major stumbling blocks as: lack of general management or line experience (82 percent), not being in the pipeline long enough (64 percent), male stereotyping and preconceptions (25 percent), an inhospitable corporate culture (18 percent) and exclusion from informal networks (49 percent). The barriers cited by women: male stereotypes and preconceptions (52 percent), exclusion from informal networks (49 percent), lack of general management experience (47 percent), an inhospitable corporate culture (35 percent) and not being in the pipeline long enough (29 percent). In addition, there are gender-based differences in the notion of success. One of the primary differences noted in the literature is relationship orientation. Men tend to derive feelings of success from their relative career achievement whereas women primarily define success in terms of their relationships (Cook, 1993). Much of the research may

have confounded gender with differences in the work roles of men and women (Raudenbush and Brennan, 1993; Loscocco and Spitze, 1990), which may over-emphasize gender differences in stress levels (Barnett, 1998). Pugliesi (1995) explored gender differences in the psychological consequences of employment (i.e. distress) based on the differential exposure and vulnerability models. She examined the direct and indirect effects of two job conditions-control and complexity-on psychological distress and happiness. When differences in age and several exposure factors were controlled, Pugliesi found that gender differences in psychological distress disappeared.

2.1. Significance of the study

The study has been undergone at CMS LTD – Chennai. There is a general belief that people working in IT industry are subject to more pressures in job (stress) due to meeting deadlines, having up to date knowledge, managing cultures etc. But we cannot conclude that employees of other industries do not have stress. As stated earlier gender now-a-days it is not at all a barrier in any industry and IT is no way an exception. Thus the basic objective of this study is to analyze if there exist and gender difference with regard to stress.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Slesinger and Stephenson in the Encyclopedia of Social Sciences define research as “The manipulation of things, concepts or symbols for the purpose of generalizing to extend, correct or verify knowledge, whether that knowledge aids in construction of theory or in the practice of an art”. Research study plays a vital role in all kinds of business activities. Business research is an organized, database, systematic, critical, objective scientific inquiring or investigation into specific problems undertaken, with the purpose of binding answer or solutions to it.

Data has been collected through a structured questionnaire and direct interviews. 100 samples has been taken for this study and convenience sampling i.e. probability sampling method has been adopted for this study.

3.1. Hypothesis

Table 1 Calculation of chi – square value

Observed frequency	Expected frequency	(O _i -E _i) ²	(O _i -E _i) ² / E _i
78	76.56	2.0736	0.027
10	11.44	2.0736	0.181
9	10.44	2.0736	0.198
3	1.56	2.0736	1.329

Table 2 Calculation of expected frequency

Factors	Yes	No	Total
Male	78	10	88
Female	9	3	12
Total	87	13	100

- Alternative Hypothesis (H₁) is rejected @ 5% significance level

Thus it is concluded that there exist significant relationship between gender of the respondents and task demands.

This study infers that job stress of the employees working in CMS Computers Ltd does not depend on gender. As against this background, the statement of hypothesis is as follows.

H01: There exist significant relationship between gender of the respondents and task demands.
H02: There is no significant relationship between gender of the respondents and task demands.
Expected frequency and Chi-Square is calculated by the formula (Table 1):

$$\text{Expected Frequency} = \frac{\text{Row Total} \times \text{Column Total}}{\text{Grand Total}}$$

$$\text{Chi - Square} = (O_i - E_i) / E_i = 1.735 \text{ (Table 2)}$$

Table Value: For degree of freedom (r – 1) (c – 1) i.e.: 12 @ 5% significance level are 3.84.

Inference:

- Since the calculated value is lesser that the table value
- Null Hypothesis (H₀) is accepted @ 5% significance level

4. CONCLUSION

An analysis of the various causes of the stress on the part of employees working in CMS Computers identified that Job is stressful irrespective of genders. Employees are treating the nature of job itself as the main reason for stress. Though the population of women respondents is limited the fact that women are subject to more stress cannot be denied. Even though both genders share the same targets, space and working environment, women play a multifaceted role when compared to men and that is the reason for this difference. Moreover women are considered to be biologically weak and are highly emotional. But this situation has to change on and as far as job stress is concerned gender difference cannot be given as an excuse because it affects the growth or the individual and ultimately the organization. Thus it is women who have to be self motivated and self sufficient enough to face the challenges in life be it the work place or the organization.

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