

Chapter 73

Analysis of Role Stress in the Indian IT Industry

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary industries face new competition requiring employees to work for longer hours under competitive time-bound deadlines. Prolonged exposure to such stressful situations leads to a depletion and exhaustion of resources in the mind and body with dysfunctional effects on job performance and overall organizational effectiveness. The Indian IT industry is a fast-paced service industry that is characterized by such stressful work situations and related outcomes. This chapter analyses the various factors that contribute to organizational stress and the role of demographic factors on role stress among the professionals of the Indian IT industry. A sample of 250 employees has been collected from the Delhi NCR region. Role stress has been measured by using the ORS scale which comprises of 10 dimensions of the role of stress that are measured by 50 items. The results show that there is a considerable amount of work related stress along with a significant impact of demographic factors on the role of stress amongst the IT professionals.

INTRODUCTION

The India Information Technology (IT) Sector is seen in conjunction with the Information Technology enabled Services (ITeS). The sector has a substantial contribution to the national economy as it caters to domestic and foreign markets. The rise of exports makes it account for almost 75% of its total earned revenue. Broadly, the sector is divided into four large segments that comprise of IT services, ITES-BPO and Software; which includes both Research and Development and Engineering.

Apart from various other accolades this sector has also been instrumental in energizing economic growth through its interaction with the higher education sector pertaining to computers and all the Engineering fields.

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As economic times get harder; there arises diminishing security of jobs, because of which people remain in jobs that are consistent; but not fulfilling. The IT sector is seen to be characterized with high Role Stress (Colomo-Palacios et al., 2014b; Karad, 2010). The nature of work pressures in contemporary organizations requires employees to work longer hours, under stressful conditions of workload, performance pressure and competition. The IT industry is seen to be characterized by challenging conditions of organizational Stress 4 6. Stress has highlighted itself in the visibility of a rising trend of employee sickness, premature labour turnover, and premature retirement due to ill health, lost production. In 1936, Prof. Hans Selye, “The father of modern stress”, researched on dysfunctional effects of stress on the human body due to overarching demands on it. The empirical research in the field began only after Hans Seyle’s first article on stress in 1956 20. Stress can be categorized into positive and negative aspects. Positive stress is also called *eustress* and can be defined as a pleasant or curative stress that helps a person to perform better, given the situational demands. The General Adaptation syndrome considers *eustress* as a part of the initial indication of the alarm in the body, but problem seems to arise when the alarm is ignored and ones resources are completely depleted and result in a burnout 21. Negative stress is reached by the body when the body alarms are ignored and the body heads towards a burnout. Increasing workplace demands along with increasing professional aspirations create a point of dissonance for the employee by making him work against all odds of time and resources. A big challenge for organizations now is to create an environment that equips employees with well suited coping mechanisms and programs in fruitful stress management.

Particularly in the IT organizations; organizational culture is seen to be lacking in terms of assisting the employees on the knowledge about stress and coping for psychological problems. The work process are highly dynamic and time bound, as employees have definite targets to meet, that are incubated in different time zones. The life expectancy of products and programs declines each year, while the demands on employees to provide better solutions increases. Internal IT departments that cannot keep pace with the changes and are not sufficiently adaptable are in a danger of being outsourced. Because of the unique set of environmental pressures in IT functions - continuous re-engineering, outsourcing, more demanding customers, general information overload (Karad, 2010) and hard decisions (Colomo-Palacios et al., 2013).

In the Indian IT industry, the trend towards aspiring youngsters who would work extra hours to acquire material comforts; seems to increase. Researchers have shown that broadly the major causes of workforce attrition in the IT sector are work-related, psychological and emotional. The specific variables are effort- reward imbalance, perceived workload and emotional exhaustion. Research shows that there is a very common practice of software engineers who have less than five years of work experience; to leave work. This is a resultant of issues like a shrinking student base, low attractiveness of the profession in terms of image and status (García-Crespo et al., 2008; Day, 2007). A direct outcome of stress is seen in the high levels of attrition that the industry faces. A big challenge for contemporary organizations is to create an environment that equips employees with well suited coping mechanisms and programs in stress management. Research shows that, high levels of stress can lead to emotional exhaustion, lower organizational commitment, and increased turnover intentions (Cropanzano et al. 2003). More recently, research by Colomo-Palacios et al. (2014) shows that stress also leads to IT career abandonment.

A big challenge that the organizations face is that, stress interventions cannot be used as a blanket strategy for all the employees. Apart from individual differences that exist in the workforce; there are always generic differences that are brought forward by demographic factors. The present study explores in detail, the role of various demographic factors in studying workplace stress among the professionals of the IT industry. There are extremely few researches that explore this aspect in the Indian IT industry.

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