A Study of Role Stress among the IT Professionals in India: Examining the Impact of Demographic Factors

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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. The present study 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 ten dimensions of role stress that are measured by 50 items. The results show that there is significant impact of demographic factors on the Role Stress amongst the IT professionals.

Keywords: Information Technology Professionals, Organizational Stress, Role Stress, Stress

INTRODUCTION

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 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, out-
sourcing, 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). Adirect 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. The outcomes of the study will be beneficial for the management professionals in dealing with different strata of employees, when it comes to the issue of workplace stress.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lazarus (1993) explained Stress, as a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that the, “environmental demands exceed the personal and social resources that the individual is able to mobilize”. Hans Selye referred to stress as the, “non-specific response of the body to any demand for change” (Selye, 1997). Research shows that Stress has been studied from various contemporary and historic perspectives. Its impact on work outcomes has been heavily research upon. Researchers have also tried to identify the role of different cultural, demographic and social factors on stress. While on the one hand it has been reported that there are no differences between women and men in relation to workplace stress, it has also been noted that there are differences in both stressors and the severity of stress between the genders.

Spielberger & Reheiser (1994) conducted a study with 1781 working adults, measuring gender differences in occupational stress using the Job Stress Survey (JSS) in American university and corporate settings. It was found that there were no significant differences in the overall stress levels for the two genders, although occupational stress level was highly significant with managerial/professional participants (Spielberger & Rehise, 1994).

Russell & Zinta (2000) investigated the relationship of Organizational Stress and exhaustion to work outcomes such as commitment, turnover intentions, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Based on the Conservation of Resources (COR) model, it was found that stress & emotional exhaustion were negatively related to organizational commitment and supervisory commitment. Emotional exhaustion effected turnover intentions positively. Organizational citizenship behaviors were studied and were found to be negatively related to organizational stress & emotional exhaustion. Therefore a stressed employee was more likable to quit his job.
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