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An Empirical Study on Work Related Stress Faced by the Employees Across the Business Processing Outsourcing (BPO'S) in Chennai

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Abstract: India is regarded as the premier destination for global IT and ITeS outsourcing, accounting for almost 55% of the global sourcing market in 2010, according to the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. The ITeS sector includes IT hardware, software and services. In this research IT and ITES has been presumed as similar to BPO's. Chennai is the hub for Business process outsourcing accounted for large number of employments. Therefore this study attempt to address the health related issues faced by the IT and & ITES employee with reference to BPO's. Business process outsourcing (BPO) is defined simply as the movement of business processes from inside the organization to an external service provider. With the global telecommunications infrastructure now well established and consistently reliable, BPO initiatives often include shifting work to international providers. Five BPO international hot spots have emerged, although firms from many other countries specialize in various business processes and exporting services. They are: 1. India, engineering and technical; 2. China, manufacturing and technical; 3. Mexico manufacturing; 4. United States, analysis and creativity; 5. Philippines, administration. Each of these countries has complex economies that span the range of business activities, but from a BPO perspective; they have comparative advantages in the specific functions cited. With a strategy to eliminate non-core functions because of the job shift that accompanies the quest to employ the highest- valued talent, BPO has both been hailed and vilified. The sample size was taken by 500. The following statistical tools was used in this research are percentage analysis, chi-square method and ANOVA one-way classification.

INTRODUCTION

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is defined simply as the movement of business processes from inside the organization to an external service provider. With the global telecommunications infrastructure now well established and consistently reliable, BPO initiatives often include shifting work to international

providers. Business executives and owners see it as a way to eliminate business processes that are not part of their organization's core competence. Back-office functions, such as payroll and benefits administration, customer service, call center, and technical support are just a few of the processes that organizations of all sizes have been able to outsource to others who specialize in those areas. Removing these functions from their internal operations enables organizations to reduce payroll and other overhead costs. In an era when executives have been admonished by business commentators and analysts to focus on core competencies, BPO offers an opportunity to achieve that goal in a dramatic new way. India in the recent years has shown huge developments in the areas of communication, power and software developments. It has already established itself as a global BPO hub and is fast becoming a popular outsourcing destination for major manufacturers across the globe. Our country is fast emerging as a winner in this outsourcing services hype. Today, the US based companies are ranking India to be their first choice as an offshore outsourcing destination. India stands as one of the major players in the outsourcing industry, in terms of well educated, talented, low cost and English speaking workforce, excellent IT and networking infrastructure, a fairly stable political scenario, friendly laws and well laid taxes and quality certified software firms. Despite this, Benner (1987) explains that, this industry has typically created more stress among its workers making them to face a lot of physical, mental and moral ethical related issues. Medical research has shown that as much as 90 percent of illness, poor health and disease are stress-related. BPOs employees' daily experience is—burnout due to the repetitive nature of their work and un-ending nightshifts. According to BPO employee survey conducted by Data quest (2004), BPO services are ranked high for attrition due to health reasons, such as sleeping disorders (83%), ear problems (8.5%) and eye sightedness problems (10.6%). This would lead to researches on this issue and find out what is the stress level faced by the workers in the BPOs at Chennai. Hence, this study has proposed to find out the work related stress faced by the BPOs Worker at Chennai, since Chennai is the major hub for the BPO industries in Tamil Nadu.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

BPO E-Sat Survey Report (2007) addresses the biggest bane of BPO employees which is ever increasing stress, which is the root for numerous other physiological and psychological ailments. Reasons are aplenty, right from working hours to insufficient holidays.

BPO E-Sat Survey Report (2007) underlines the other worrying ailments that have increased over the years as psychological ones like depression and anxiety. Indeed, BPO employees are well versed with panic or anxiety attacks, and often a friend or a colleague has been a victim of the same.

Sujatha R. (Jan 17, 2007) quotes that people working in the information technology and the allied services sector may be earning attractive salaries, but suffer from physiological and psychological problems. Most of them blame it on the extreme pressure and competitiveness at workplace. Some cope. Others leave the industry, say human resource personnel.

Bindu Sridhar (Jan 09, 2008) quotes from his study that the physical and emotional wear out take a little longer to manifest. Long hours behind the wheel or in crowded buses and trains with high noise levels raise blood pressure, and cause workers to get sick and stay home more often. These people are more prone to headaches and chest pains, and likely to be psychologically stressed out from the hassles of traffic and lack of rest. Fatigue also leads to risk while driving, making them vulnerable to road accidents.

BPO Employees Opinion Survey (2009) proves that high rate of attrition is observed among the middle level executives, in the post recession scenario. It seems as if, the companies will have a tough time retaining their quality talent at the middle level as they were the ones most eager to quit their present organization, as per the survey results. Also, the middle level executives seemed to be under more stress in comparison to others which could have influenced their opinion regarding making a job change.

Business Line (Jun 10, 2009) reports the case of Satyam company which has lost close to 2,350 employees in the first two months of 2009. February saw the highest monthly attrition over the last one year, with 1,602 professionals quitting the company. As on March 28, 2009, Satyam (standalone) had a total head count of 41,622 associates. Between January 2008 and February 2009, the company saw a total of 9,457 staffers leave, according to the company's latest disclosure to the stock exchange.

The Journal of USACHPPM (Jan 17, 2010) points out that in Northwestern National Life Insurance Company, 46 percent of American workers reported that their jobs were somewhat very stressful. Twenty-seven percent reported that their jobs were the single greatest source of stress in their lives. Overall, nearly 72 percent said that they have frequent stress-related physical and mental conditions. In fact, stress-related disabilities have gone from 6 percent to 13 percent over the past 9 years.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the work-related stress of employees in IT Sector with special reference to Chennai City.
- To identify physiological stress among the IT employees across the IT services in Chennai.
- To find out sociological stress among the IT employees across the IT services in Chennai.
- To analyze home stress among the IT employees across the IT services in Chennai.

METHODOLOGY

Bunge (1987) used group interview in his study on stress management. This was found to be appropriate because of the interactive and transactional nature of the individual and the factor of stress. And its validity and reliability has been proven over 30 years since its use. Despite this the researchers have formulated a questionnaire which best suit the non-western countries like India. It consisted of 31 items including personal questions. Each question was well structured to obtain the objectives of the research

The researcher identified renowned and registered top 10 BPO service providers through www.info24by7.com one of the web site providing BPO related information. Which are highly rated by the reputed organizations They are Reliance BPO, Sitel India , HCL Business Services, Redington Serv, 3i Infotech, Altech Star, Infosearch, Sutherland Global Services, Wipro and Serco India BPO

The researchers has approached 900 respondents randomly altogether out this 750 were agree to take part in the research. Finally we have received only 500 completed questionnaires. In order to retain objectivity, every attempt was made to take an unbiased sample. A well structured questionnaire was prepared and used to collect primary data considering 7 parameters other than personal information for calculating the employees' Vulnerability to stressors:

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Socio Economic Background

This section provides useful insight into the socio – economic characteristics of the respondents and the various dimensions of Stress experienced by the employees of Business Process Outsourcing services in Tamil Nadu. The table given below depicts the age wise classification of the respondents.

Table 1
Age wise classification of the respondents

S. No	Age Group	No. of respondents (n = 500)	Percentage (100%)
1	Below 25 years	134	26.8
2	26 to 30 years	170	34.0
3	31 to 35 years	122	24.4
4	36 years and above	74	14.8

Source: Primary Data

The above table shows that 170 respondents are in the age group of 26 to 30 years constituting 34%. 26% of the respondents belong to the age group of below 25 years and only 14.8% of the respondents are in the age group of above 36 years.

It is clear that 34% of the respondents lie in the age group of 26 - 30 years which is the highest. And 8% of the respondents lie in the age group above 36 years which is the lowest of all. Thus it is inferred that the IT & ITES companies catch the attention of employees in the age group of 26 – 30 years. IT & ITES jobs are peculiarly suitable to youngsters who are below 30 years.

The below table exhibits that 274 respondents are men which constitutes 54.8%. Whereas, 226 respondents are women constituting 45.2%.

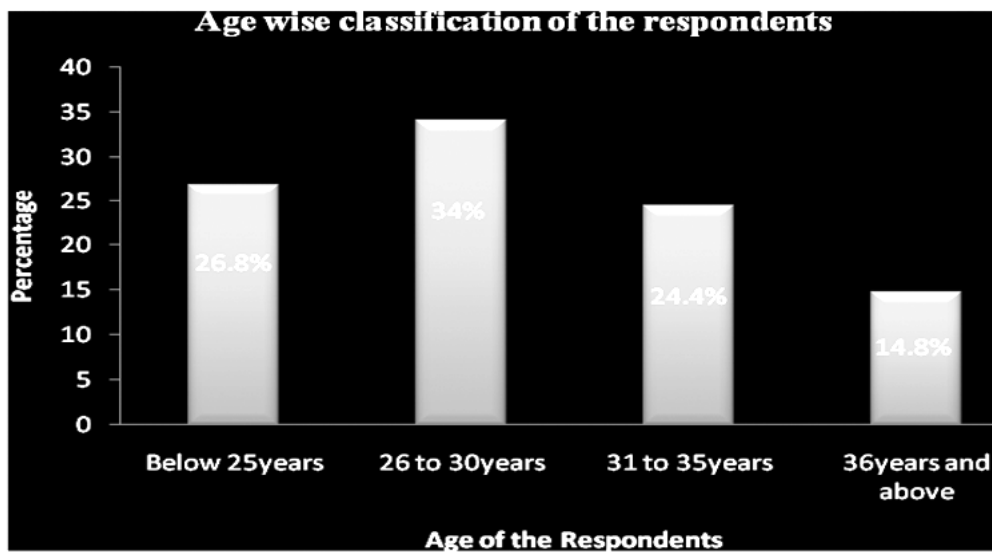


Figure 1: Age wise classification of the respondents

Table 2
Gender wise classification of the respondents

S. No	Gender	No. of respondents(n = 500)	Percentage (100%)
1	Male	274	54.8
2	Female	226	45.2

Source: Primary Data

It is observed that men are found to be flexible in working in the IT & ITeS than the women therefore; it is found that man category is the bread winner of IT & ITeS job than the woman, who is highly motivated and suitable to working conditions in the IT & ITeS.

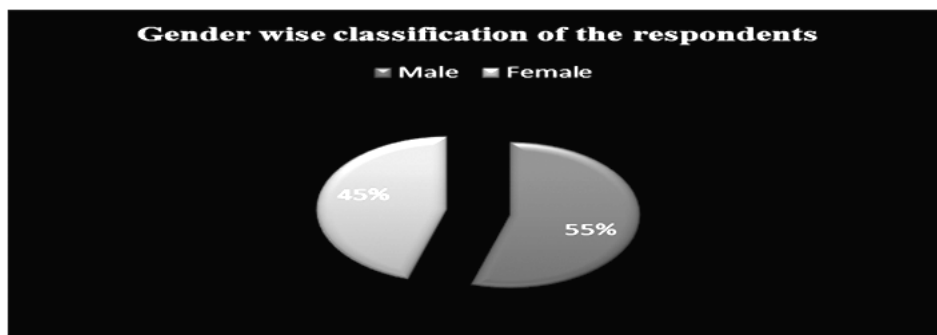


Figure 2: Gender wise classification of the respondents

Table 3
Classification based on Educational Qualification

S. No	Educational Qualification	No. of respondents (n = 500)	Percentage (100%)
1	Under Graduate Arts & Science	72	14.4
2	Engineering	123	24.6
3	Post Graduate Arts & Science	223	44.6
4	Engineering	82	16.4

Source: Primary Data

The above table indicates that 14.4% of respondents have completed Under Graduate degree course from Arts and Science stream; 44.6% of the respondents are Post Graduate degree holders in Arts and Science Streams; 24.6% of the respondents have Under Graduate degree in Engineering and 16% of the respondents are Post Graduate degree holders in Engineering.

It is clear that 44.6% of the respondents are possessing Post Graduate degree holders in Arts and Science which is the highest among various qualifications. And 16% of the respondents are Post Graduate degree holders in engineering which is the least of all. It is observed that Post Graduate Arts and Science people are highly attracted by the IT & ITeS job.

The above table indicates that 35% of the respondents are earning a monthly income of Rs.20001 to Rs.25000. There are 23% of the respondents earning monthly income below Rs.20000, and only 7.8% of the respondents are earning above Rs.35000.

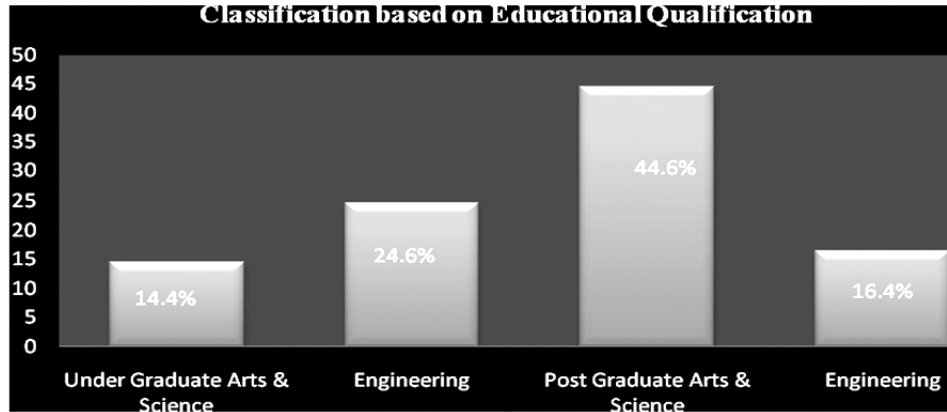


Figure 3: Classification based on Educational Qualification

Table 4
Classification based on Monthly Income

S. No	Monthly Income	No. of respondents (n = 500)	Percentage (100%)
1	Below Rs.20,000	117	23.4
2	Rs.20,001 - 25,000	175	35.0
3	Rs.25,001- Rs.30,000	101	20.2
4	Rs.30,001- Rs.35,000	68	13.6
5	Above Rs.35,000	39	7.8

Source: Primary Data

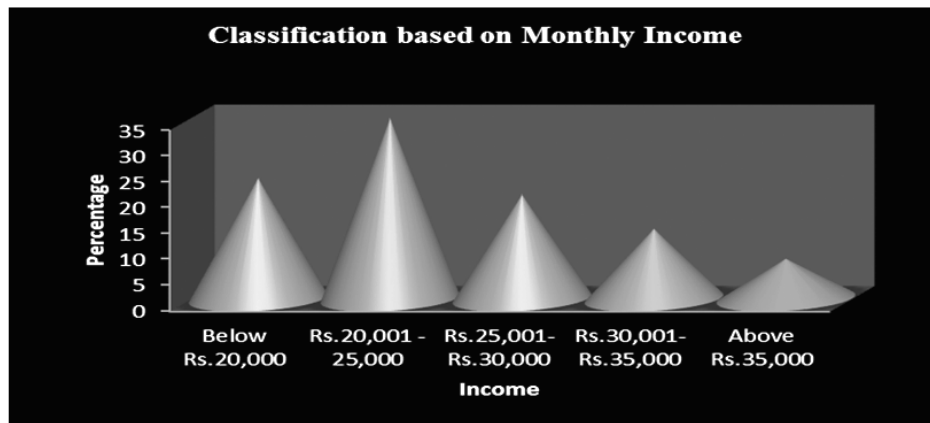


Figure 4: Classification based on Monthly Income

above Rs. 35000. The highest percentage (35%) of the respondents is earning a monthly income Rs. 20001 to Rs. 25000.

CHI – SQUARE DISTRIBUTION

Null Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no association between overall stress of the respondents and various dimension of stress.

Alternative Hypothesis

H₁: There is an association between the overall stress of the respondents and various dimension of stress.

Table 5
Chi – Square test between Overall stress of the respondents and their various dimensions of stress vulnerability

S. No	Various dimensions of stress	Overall stress			Statistical inference
		Low (n = 234)	High (n = 266)	Total (n = 500)	
I	Physical Stress				
1	Low	120(51.3%)	122(45.9%)	242(48.4%)	X ² =1.463 Df=1.226>0.05
2	High	114(48.7%)	144(54.1%)	258(51.6%)	Not Significant
II	Organisational Stress				
1	Low	119(50.9%)	77(28.9%)	196(39.2%)	X ² =25.068 Df=1.000<0.05
2	High	115(49.1%)	189(71.1%)	304(60.8%)	Significant
III	Occupational Stress				
1	Low	122(52.1%)	106(39.8%)	228(45.6%)	X ² =7.576 Df=1.006<0.05
2	High	112(47.9%)	160(60.2%)	272(54.4%)	Significant
IV	Social Stress				
1	Low	161(68.8%)	74(27.8%)	235(47%)	X ² =83.942 Df=1.000<0.05
2	High	73(31.2%)	192(72.2%)	265(53%)	Significant
V	Psychological Stress				
1	Low	165(70.5%)	72(27.1%)	237(47.4%)	X ² =94.242 Df=1.000<0.05
2	High	69(29.5%)	194(72.9%)	263(52.6%)	Significant
VI	General behaviour Stress				
1	Low	189(80.8%)	75(28.2%)	264(52.8%)	X ² =138.067 Df=1.000<0.05
2	High	45(19.2%)	191(71.8%)	236(47.2%)	Significant
VII	Home Stress				
1	Low	170(72.6%)	68(25.6%)	238(47.6%)	X ² =110.654 Df=1.000<0.05
2	High	64(27.4%)	198(74.4%)	262(52.4%)	Significant

Sources: Computed from the primary data

Significant at 5% level

Inference

The difference between the overall stresses levels the respondents and their various dimensions of stress vulnerability are at significant in some aspects and not significant in some aspects. It is further inferred that overall stress significantly associate with the following dimensions Organisational Stress, Occupational Stress, Social Stress, Psychological Stress, General behaviour Stress and Home Stress based on X² Value which is less than 0.05. Further it would found that there is no significant association between physical stress and overall stress level.

STUDENT – ‘T’ TEST

Null hypothesis

H_0 : There is no significant difference between the gender of the respondents and their Organisational stress.

Alternative hypothesis

H_1 : There is a significant difference between the gender of the respondents and their Organisational stress.

Table 6
students’ “T” test difference between the gender of the Respondents and their overall stress

<i>S.no</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N=500</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D</i>	<i>Statistical inference</i>
I	Physical Stress				
1	Male	(n=274)	18.52	2.910	T=-.167 Df=498.867>0.05
2	Female	(n=226)	18.57	3.030	Not Significant
II	Organisational Stress				
1	Male	(n=274)	17.69	2.763	T=-1.894 Df=498.059>0.05
2	Female	(n=226)	18.15	2.586	Not Significant
III	Occupational Stress				
1	Male	(n=274)	18.39	3.219	T=.647 Df=498.518>0.05
2	Female	(n=226)	18.20	3.352	Not Significant
IV	Social Stress				
1	Male	(n=274)	18.62	2.227	T=.946 Df=498.344>0.05
2	Female	(n=226)	18.42	2.691	Not Significant
V	Psychological Stress				
1	Male	(n=274)	18.72	2.714	T=2.108 Df=498.036<0.05
2	Female	(n=226)	18.19	2.973	Significant
VI	General behaviour Stress				
1	Male	(n=274)	18.14	2.266	T=.583 Df=498.560>0.05
2	Female	(n=226)	18.01	2.575	Not Significant
VII	Home Stress				
1	Male	(n=274)	18.49	3.101	T=.732 Df=498.465>0.05
2	Female	(n=226)	18.29	3.141	Not Significant
VIII	Overall stress				
1	Male	(n=274)	128.58	8.843	T=.922 Df=498.357>0.05
2	Female	(n=226)	127.82	9.692	Not Significant

Sources: Computed from the primary data
Significant at 5% level

Inference

S. No	Overall stress	Students 'T' Value	Statistical inference
1	Gender of the respondents	T= 1.894	.059>0.05 Not Significant

The calculated value $T = 1.894$ and $(P > 0.05)$, $.059 > 0.05$ Hence, the calculated value is greater than the table value. Therefore the research hypothesis is rejected and the null hypothesis is accepted.

The difference between the gender of the IT & ITES employees and their organisational stress is not significant. Therefore it is evident that there is no association between the gender of the respondents and their organisational stress. These results show that there is no significant association with other parameters like physical stress, occupational stress, social stress, general behavioural stress and home stress. Whereas psychological stress has significant association with the gender of the IT & ITES service employees. Further it would understand that the overall stress dimensions are not significantly associated with the gender of the respondents working in IT & ITES services.

ANOVA ONE WAY CLASSIFICATION

Null Hypothesis

H_0 : There is no difference between the educational qualification of the respondents and their social stress vulnerability.

Alternative Hypothesis

H_1 : There is a difference between the educational qualification of the respondents and their social stress vulnerability.

Table 7
One-way ANOVA difference between Income of the respondents and their various dimension of stress vulnerability

S. No	Income	Mean	S.D	SS	Df	MS	Statistical inference
I	Physical Stress						
	Between Groups			688.44	4	172.11	
1	G1 (n=117)	17.50	2.82				F=23.090.000<0.05 Significant
2	G2(n=175)	17.69	3.20				
3	G3(n=101)	20.41	2.24				
4	G4 (n=68)	19.63	1.90				
5	G5 (n=39)	18.77	2.48				
	Within Groups			3689.67	495	7.45	
II	Organisational Stress						
	Between Groups			234.29	4	58.57	
1	G1 (n=117)	18.62	2.98				F=8.576.000<0.05 Significant
2	G2(n=175)	17.29	2.75				

(contd...Table 7)

S. No	Income	Mean	S.D	SS	Df	MS	Statistical inference
3	G3(n=101)	18.50	2.69				
4	G4 (n=68)	18.10	1.93				
5	Above Rs.35,000 (n=39)	16.56	1.18				
	Within Groups			3380.70	495	6.83	
III	Occupational Stress						
	Between Groups			408.00	4	102.00	
1	G1 (n=117)	17.85	3.50				F=10.191.000<0.05
2	G2(n=175)	18.70	2.69				Significant
3	G3(n=101)	19.04	3.03				
4	G4 (n=68)	16.37	3.98				
5	G5 (n=39)	19.41	2.74				
	Within Groups			4954.56	495	10.00	
IV	Social Stress						
	Between Groups			403.66	4	100.91	
1	G1 (n=117)	18.37	2.56				F=19.325.000<0.05
2	G2(n=175)	19.03	2.36				Significant
3	G3(n=101)	19.11	2.03				
4	G4 (n=68)	16.38	2.42				
5	G5 (n=39)	19.03	.95				
	Within Groups	2584.88	495	5.22			
V	Psychological Stress						
	Between Groups			108.68	4	27.17	
1	G1 (n=117)	18.33	2.93				F=3.426.000<0.05
2	G2(n=175)	19.07	2.87				Significant
3	G3(n=101)	18.08	3.11				
4	G4 (n=68)	17.82	1.67				
5	G5 (n=39)	18.46	2.95				
	Within Groups			3926.11	495	7.93	
VI	General behaviour Stress						
	Between Groups			701.84	4	175.46	
1	G1 (n=117)	18.37	2.56				F=39.585.000<0.05
2	G2(n=175)	19.01	1.87				Significant
3	G3(n=101)	17.98	2.51				
4	G4 (n=68)	15.26	1.10				
5	G5 (n=39)	18.18	1.68				
	Within Groups			2194.11	495	4.43	

(contd...Table 7)

S. No	Income	Mean	S.D	SS	Df	MS	Statistical inference
VII	Home Stress						
	Between Groups			246.97	4	61.74	
1	G1 (n=117)	19.38	2.30				F=6.640.000<0.05
2	G2(n=175)	18.47	2.95				Significant
3	G3(n=101)	18.27	3.07				
4	G4 (n=68)	17.53	2.12				
5	G5 (n=39)	16.97	5.67				
	Within Groups			4603.02	495	9.29	
VIII	Overall stress						
	Between Groups			4672.92	4	1168.23	
1	G1 (n=117)	128.43	9.33				F=15.265.000<0.05
2	G2(n=175)	129.26	9.99				Significant
3	G3(n=101)	131.38	8.11				
4	G4 (n=68)	121.10	6.79				
5	G5 (n=39)	127.38	4.33				
	Within Groups			37881.75	495	76.52	

Sources: Computed from the primary data

Significant at 5% level

G1 = Below Rs.20, 000 G2= Rs.20, 001to 25,000 G3 = Rs. 25,001 to Rs.30, 000 G4 = Rs.30, 001 to 35,000 G5 = Above Rs.35, 000

Inference

The calculated value is $F = 15.265$ and $(P < 0.05)$. Hence, the calculated value is less than the table value. Therefore null hypothesis is rejected and the research hypothesis is accepted.

The difference between the Income of the respondents and their various dimensions of stress vulnerability is at significant level. It is further inferred that income drawn by the respondents and the overall stress are having significant difference. It is understood that monthly Income drawn by the IT & ITeS employees are not connected with the overall stressors. It is significantly proved that income alone will not be the cause for various dimensions of stressors.

FINDINGS

1. *Age Segment:* It is clear that 34% of the respondents lie in the age group of 26 - 30 years which is the highest. And 8% of the respondents lie in the age group above 36 years which is the lowest of all. Thus it is inferred that the IT & ITES companies catch the attention of employees in the age group of 26 – 30 years. IT & ITeS jobs are peculiarly suitable to youngsters who are below 30 years
2. *Gender:* It is observed that men are found to be flexible in working in the IT & ITeS than the women

therefore; it is found that man category is the bread winner of IT & ITeS job than the woman, who is highly motivated and suitable to working conditions in the IT & ITeS.

3. *Good work environment*: Existence of good work environment in the IT & ITeS is the main reason for joining IT & ITeS as expressed by 25.8% of the respondents.
4. *High growth opportunity* – 32.8% of the respondents believe that high growth opportunity or promotions are the reasons for joining the IT & ITeS.
5. *Poor Communication between the Managers and employee*: (23.3%) of respondents admitted that they have stress due to poor communication between the managers and employee
6. *I am suffering from migraine headaches, other aches and pains*: Out of the total, 47.6% of the respondents strongly agree that there are migraine headaches and other pains followed by 24.8% of the respondents agree with the statement.
7. *I do think that my social life is affected detrimentally*: of all 32.6 % of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that “I do think that my social life is affected detrimentally”.
8. *I can spend enough time for my personal works*: The highest 43.4% of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that “I can spend enough time for my personal works”.
9. *I do have difficulty in sleeping due to Increase or decrease in activity level*: of all 29.2 % of the respondents strongly agree with the statement that “I do have difficulty in sleeping due to Increase or decrease in activity level.
10. *With regard to psychological stress*, 52.6% of the respondents experience at high level and 47.4% of the respondents at low level. There are 52.8% of the respondents who are exposed to low level general behavioural stress.

SUGGESTIONS

To the Professionals

1. Employees should take care of their health by regular visit to doctors and they are advised to go for exercises, meditation, and concentrate on their eating habits to recharge their energy batteries.
2. The employees are requested not to consume tobacco, alcohol, drugs, and excessive caffeine, which are resulting in physical and mental illness.
3. The employees are advised to spend their personal time sufficiently and voluntarily take part in training offered at their workplace.
4. The IT and ITeS employees are advised to take proper rest and also seek co-operation and support from family and friends to share their positive and negative feelings in order to maintain their work-life balances.

To the Organisation

1. The organisation also should give importance to assertiveness training and laughter/smile therapy. After all, a smile livens up the face and adds to personality. It also enhances mental strength.

2. The organisation should have a committee to identify the main causes of work related stress in the IT & ITeS centres by identifying the existing control measures to minimise stress and make recommendations where measures are found to be unsatisfactory.
3. There should be a mechanism to identify what the potentials to cause a stress-related illness are. This could be done by using a stress survey, talking to staff, use of questionnaires, analysis of sickness absence rates etc.
4. The organisation should encourage its employees to share their feelings and bitter experiences since the employer is chiefly instrumental for high employee motivation and morale. And he has to address their grievances and help them to improve what they lack.
5. As for the compensation and reward aspects, the employees must feel rewarded, recognised and appreciated. Giving periodical raise in salary or position helps to retain staff.
6. Once in a month a day may be dedicated to stress reduction day.

CONCLUSION

Work stress is a real challenge for workers and their employing organisations. In everyday language, policy circles and across the social sciences, stress continues to demand attention. Workplace stress is costly and becoming more so. Results indicate that male respondents have high level of psychological stress and female respondents have high level of physical stress followed by home stress. It has many causes, and these involve complex combinations of physical, social and psychological elements. Stress affects people differently; it is difficult to measure and has a fraught relationship with both ill-health and unhappiness. It is important that our workplace is being continuously monitored for stress problems. Further, it is not only important to identify stress problems and to deal with them but to promote healthy work and reduce harmful aspects of work. The proposed model provides persuasive findings that translate directly into policy implications for employers and policy-makers.

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