
Job-related stressors: challenges and hindrances in innovative work

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Abstract: Work Stress is one of the most demoralizing and perilous hindrance which affects the overall effectiveness of any employee. Especially in the IT industry, where the intellectual ability of employees plays a major role, work related stressors need to be identified. The objective of the study is to examine the job-related stressors experienced by employees in the IT sector. Some of the work-related stressors considered in the study are job insecurity, workload, feedback and suggestions, daily challenge in work and daily hindrance in work. The sample size of the study is 60 and respondents were IT employees. Regression analysis is used to identify the significant stressors suffered by employees. The results suggest that workload is the significant stressor of work stress. Suggestions are given to line managers to help them handle the stress experienced by their workers.

Keywords: work related stressors, IT sector, workload, job insecurity, innovative work, hindrances

INTRODUCTION

Every job presents its own problems, the very nature of some jobs requires employee attention to handle the stress they face. Employees working in the IT industry are inclined to build up a great deal of medical issues because of constant physical and mental apprehension caused by their work. Specifically, the study is conducted on IT workers due to the complexity of the work they perform. The general stressors experienced by employees of the IT sector are the fear of losing the job, uncompensated overtime work hours, calls even after office working hours etc. They are more professional, achievement oriented and they do not have much of social life and the time spent with their family has become less. There seems to be a lack of recreational activities and opportunities to relax. These are the reasons behind people working in the IT sector falling into depression which leads to high stress. These unrealistic demands reflect in the performance of the valuable and worthy asset working in the organization. Stress is the body's response to any change that requires a modification or reaction. The body responds to these progressions with physical, mental, and passionate reactions. Indeed, even certain life changes, for example, an advancement, a home loan, or the introduction of a youngster produces pressure. Stress can be positive, keeping us ready, persuaded, and prepared to dodge peril. Stress becomes adverse when an individual countenances nonstop difficulty without alleviation or unwinding between stressors. Accordingly, the individual becomes exhausted, and stress-related strain fabricates.

The pandemic COVID 19 has inflicted destruction on the well-being and mental health of employees in the world. This period has been extremely stressful for all. The nationwide lockdowns have led to an economic halt causing loss of revenue and shutting down of companies and industries, and cost-cutting and lay-off of workers. Specifically, the Indian working class is facing fear, neurosis and job-related stress. Working environment is a major contributor to work-related stress. In this pandemic, people work from home and the home environment is not suitable for work, which makes it more stressful. The insecurity feeling towards their job is another prominent stressor experienced by IT employees. The workload assigned to employees is sometimes unrealistic which develops into a major stressor. In the regular schedule of work assigned, the challenges and hindrances faced like network issues, speed of the electronic gadgets, and speed of the internet connectivity etc. will lead to work stress. Our research idea is based on the rich knowledge acquired by our peer teams across the university. (A.C.Gomathi, S.R.Xavier Rajarathinam, A.Mohammed Sadiqc, Rajeshkumar, 2020; Danda et al., 2009; Danda and Ravi, 2011; Dua et al., 2019; Ezhilarasan et al., 2019; Krishnan and Chary, 2015; Manivannan, I., Ranganathan, S., Gopalakannan, S. et al., 2018; Narayanan et al., 2012, 2009; Neelakantan et al., 2013, 2011; Neelakantan and Sharma, 2015; Panchal et al., 2019; Prasanna et al., 2011; Priya S et al., 2009; Rajeshkumar et al., 2019; Ramadurai et al., 2019; Ramakrishnan et al., 2019; Ramesh et al., 2016; Venugopalan et al., 2014). Now we have begun to work on work stress related studies. The primary purpose of the study is to find out the causes of stress through job related stressors. It is highly essential to reduce the stress level of employees, so that the managers

can minimize job related errors, incidents, accidents and injuries. The conceptual model tested in this study is depicted in Figure 1.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Belete *et al.*, have studied the association between work related stress, thoughts of suicide, substance usage, social support and workload. The study was conducted on 403 textile employees. Logistic regression analysis and adjusted odds ratio was used to analyze the data. The results proved that more employees experience higher levels of job-related stress. The significant factors which contribute to job-related stress are workload, substance usage and social support (Belete *et al.*, 2020).

Ahmed *et al.*, have studied the impact of stress on job performance of employees. The study has been done on 133 employees of private sector universities working in various departments like management studies, engineering technology, medical science, textile and fashion technology. The authors have analyzed the data using multiple regression analysis. The results suggest that heavy workload, conflict in role assigned and insufficient monetary reward are the major factors causing stress. The increase in stress level in employees reduces the performance efficiency of them. Hence it is necessary for managers to take steps to reduce the workload and give more clarity regarding roles to be performed and provide sufficient training along with adequate salary to reduce the stress level of employees (Ahmed *et al.*, 2014).

Padma *et al.*, have focused on studying the stress associated with the health problems experienced by people in the software profession. The authors have accessed the work stress and quality of work life of employees. Generally, IT employees experience stress due to their nature of work, goals fixed, shift timings and excess workload. The respondents were 1000 employees working in the IT and BPO sector. The results suggested that people with health problems experienced a high level of stress. The authors have recommended taking measures to reduce stress through counselling, modification in lifestyle, change in diet etc. (Padma *et al.*, 2015).

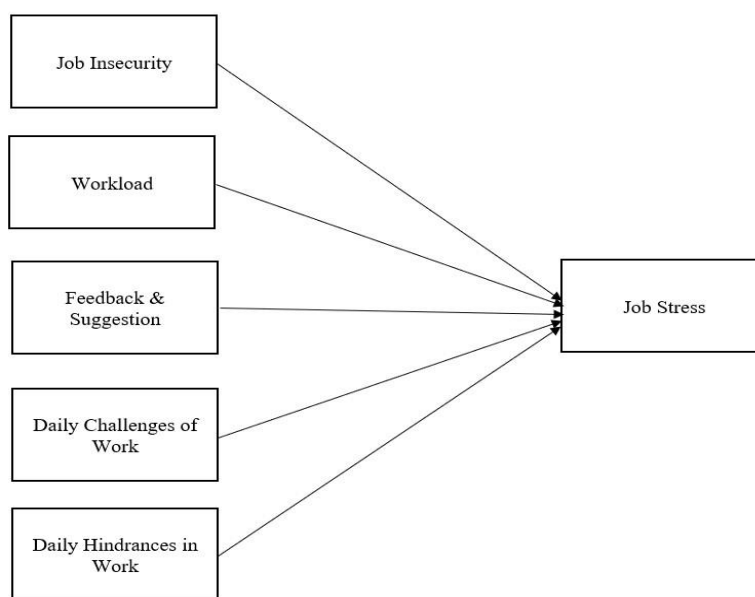


Fig.1: Conceptual Model of the study

Gladies & Kennedy have studied the significant correlation between organizational climate and job stress among the women working in IT companies of India. The study has been done on 450 women employees in India, so that they can eliminate the causes of worry and helplessness in the workplace. The authors have explored the ways to manage stress especially for workers in IT companies. The results show that in the organizational climate, the mean of pay discrepancy was high, but in the case of career development opportunities gender equality was maintained (Gladies and Kennedy, 2011).

Charu, 2013⁴ has studied that higher stress is directly proportional to quality of work life for IT Professionals. The study has been done on 203 associates of the IT sector at the age range of 20 to 25 years. The author has studied some factors like fair pay structure, steady role demands, supervisory support, congenial job interpreted, capability fit of the job, role autonomy and stress that directly affect the quality of work life. The main reason for stress amongst the associates of the IT industry is the rapid change over in technology (Charu, 2013).

Khalid *et al.* have studied the relationship between stress, supportive leadership and job performance. The study has been done on 200 academicians from four different institutions. The results have proved that to increase the performance of an individual in an organization, an employee should receive good support from their leaders.

Hence, having a supportive leader can improve the performance of an employee even at offended situations. Supportive leaders will reduce the stress experienced by employees (Khalid et al., 2012).

Nagesh & Murthy have studied the concept of stress and workload at IT call centers. The authors have mentioned that 80% of employers do not take measures to handle work stress of employees. They have analyzed six factors that contribute to workplace stress like job demands, control over work, peer relationship, co-operation and organizational change. They had suggested measures in the form of training to facilitate organizations and individuals to manage stress at workplaces (Nagesh and Murthy, 2008).

Seibt *et al.*, have studied that job stress is always present among employees, however it can be reduced by improving the working conditions and quality of benefits in the companies. (Meneze, 2005) says that rising job stress has become a challenge for the employers and higher level of job stress results in low productivity, increased absenteeism and collection of other employee problems like alcoholism, drug abuse, hypertension and host of cardiovascular problems (Seibt et al., 2009).

Ohly & Fritz have studied the impact of performance related behaviours as stressors related to job. The time bound targets and control in a job are the job characteristics which are perceived as challenges faced in a job. The study was conducted on 149 employees. The data was analysed at multiple levels. The results prove that work characteristics affect creativity and proactive behaviour on a daily basis, and these characteristics are prominent work related stressors (Ohly and Fritz, 2009).

Hon *et al.*, have studied the relationship between feedback from superiors, creativity, voice behaviour and work stress. Both positive and negative feedback becomes a major job related stressor which affects their creativity. The study was conducted on 265 employees working in China. The results suggest that employees who experience hindrance stressors are more creative when they receive less negative and highly positive feedback from their managers (Hon et al., 2013).

Srivastav has focused on the nature of role stressors that cause stress. The study was conducted on employees working in the public sector of India. The existence of stressors in different levels of employees vary based on the kind of organization they work for. The educational level of employees also had an effect on the level of various role stressors they experience. The employees working in various departments like quality, manufacturing, research and administration experience different levels of role stressors (Srivastav, 2010).

RESEARCH METHODS

Descriptive research design using questionnaires was applied in this study. The questionnaire was framed systematically through proven instruments developed by various researchers. The sampling technique used in this study is a convenience sampling method. The sample size of the study is 60 employees working in the information technology sector. The tools used in the study are frequency analysis and regression. Regression analysis is used to identify the factors affecting employee stress in the IT sector. Job insecurity was measured using the scale developed by (Hellgren et al., 1999) with 4 items. The items used to measure workload was derived from the works of (Beehr et al., 1976). The instruments used to measure daily challenge in work was developed by (Bakker et al., 2003) and daily hindrance in work is developed by (Rizzo et al., 1970). All the items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

The sample profile of the study is represented through the following pie charts.

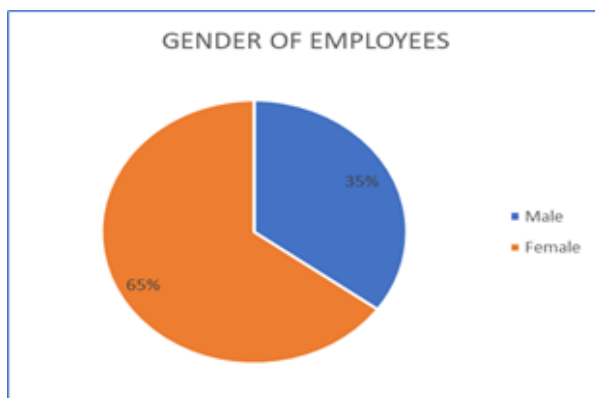


Fig.2: The pie chart depicts the percentage of gender in the sample. 35% of the sample were Male and 65% were Female employees.

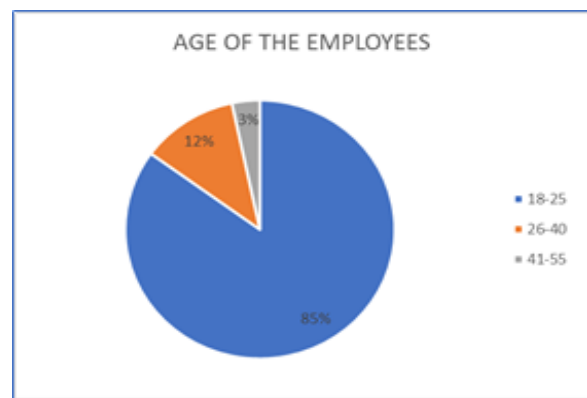


Fig.3: The pie chart describes the age of the employee respondents. 85% of employees were of age 18-25 years and 12% of employees were of age 26 – 40.

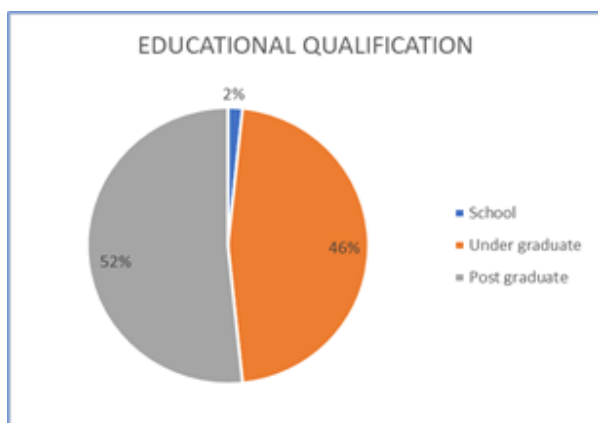


Fig.4: The chart depicts the Education background of sample respondents. 52% of respondents were Post graduates. 46% of employee respondents have completed undergraduate courses whereas only 2 % have completed only School.

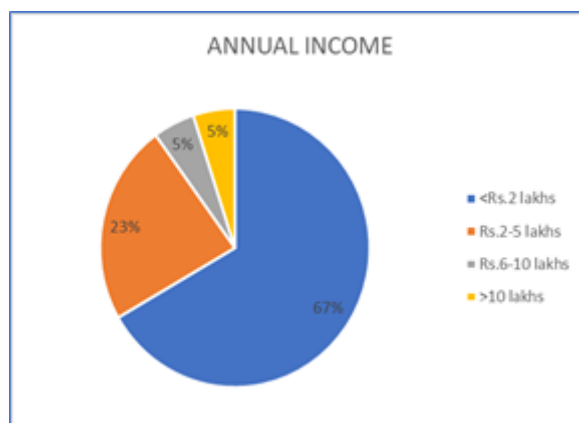


Fig.5: The pie chart describes the annual income of sample respondents 67% of respondents were earning less than Rs. 2 lakhs. 23% of employee respondents were earning Rs. 2 – 5 lakhs whereas only 10 % were earning above 6 lakhs.

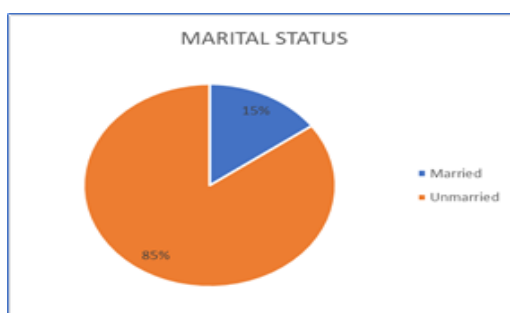


Fig.6: The marital status of sample respondents is depicted in the pie chart. 85% of the sample were married and the remaining 15% were married.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Regression analysis was conducted to understand the effect of Job based stressors on job stress. The independent variables considered in the study are Job insecurity, Workload, Feedback and suggestions, Daily challenges at work and Daily hindrance in work. The dependent variable is Work stress. IBM SPSS v23 is used to analyse the data.

The results represent that R (correlation coefficient) specifies the significance of prediction of the dependent variable. In this study, R value of 0.835 specifies that the independent variables (daily challenges, daily hindrances, job insecurity, workload, feedback and suggestions) are good predictors of job-based stress. R² (coefficient of determination) denotes the level of variation in dependent variables explained by independent variables. In this study, 68.1% of variance in job-based stress is explained by daily challenges, daily hindrances, job insecurity, workload, feedback and suggestions. Job insecurity and workload are the significant (p<0.00) predictors of job stress. Both are positive predictors of stress in the job. Daily challenges, daily hindrances and feedback and suggestions failed to predict stress. When the employees have fear of losing their job and when their workloads are unrealistic then the stress experienced by employees is augmented. Workload is a major stressor than job insecurity.

Table 1: The Beta coefficients with dependent variable – Job Stress

Independent Variables	β	p	Std. Error
Job Insecurity	0.226	0.009	0.064
Workload	0.566	0.000	0.111
Feedback and Suggestion	0.030	0.751	0.085
Daily challenges of work	0.132	0.233	0.105
Daily hindrances in work	0.076	0.474	0.115

The results we have obtained proves that job insecurity and workload are major stressors experienced by employees of Information technology companies. When the workload assigned to IT employees are high, the stress it induces is also high. Similar results were obtained by (Glaser et al., 1999) and (Cartwright et al., 2002). Previous researchers have proved that higher the workload assigned greater will be the stress experienced. Job insecurity is the next significant stressor. When the fear arises in an individual's mindset regarding the security in a job, it mandatorily leads to stress. Especially in this time of pandemic, the uncertainty prevailing in the job market conditions create the fear of losing the job. Previous researchers like (Gaunt and Benjamin, 2007) and (Heaney et al., 1994) have also substantiated that job insecurity is a perceived stressor which affects an individual badly in terms of stress.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to understand the causes of stress at the workplace particularly at the IT industry during this pandemic situation. The unrealistic workload assigned to employees is one of the major stressors which leads to stress. Work from home is widely implemented in most of the software companies, and work from home has its own pros and cons which makes it difficult to be productive. Some of the major drawbacks of virtual working is the work environment, manager employee relationship, family commitments, work commitments etc. When the workload demands are enforced on employees without understanding their real-life scenarios leads to stress. The management of IT companies need to take extra care in assigning work and getting the work done. The company can also focus on some stress relief program in order to keep the employees' content and enthusiastic to work. The feeling of job insecurity is another major stressor. The management needs to take extra efforts to make their employees feel secured in their job. When the companies fail to do so, retaining the employees becomes difficult, and as well their productivity gets diminished.

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