

Transformation of Labour Market and the Element of Stress: A Study on Women Working in IT Sector of Mumbai City

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Abstract: Globalisation has brought a sea change in industrial scenario so also in the labour market. This changing scenario opened opportunity for more and more women to join the work force. But the major fall out of this changing scenario is the organizational stress experienced by the individual employee in general and women employee in particular. This paper is an attempt to understand the intensity of various elements of stress among women InformationalTechnology professionals of Mumbai. The researcher used random convenient sampling to get information from women engaged in software development companies located in Mumbai. A rating and comparative analysis was performed to understand the stress elements among them. This paper also tries to find the cause of these stresses so that organization can devise possible measures to thwart them.

Keywords: *Globalisation, Network Economy and Stress*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the mid of twentieth century the world industrial scenario started changing from Ford System of mass production to the concept of Just in Time , leading to a new system of networked flexible production driven by market force. In this structure, the various operational activities are located globally and networked through a commodity chain. This is achieved by linking diverse economic entities across the globe. This is an arrangement,where various small family of farms are aligned together to form huge Trans National Corporation. Effectiveness of this network solely depends upon the Information Technology (IT) infrastructure and IT Enabled Services. This changing industrial scenario consequenced with the flexibility of labour and in the increasing mobility of financial and human resources. With this the concept of globalization with respect to business, trade and commerce came into force. **Friedman, 2006**, coined **Globalisation 3.0** for the period 2000 and onwards enabling individuals all over the world to become empowered as they began to realise that they had more power than ever to go global as *individuals*, had more opportunities for work and to think of themselves as individuals. Researchers are of the opinion that,the globalisation forces have engineered changes in social status at the Macro level , influencedthe economic and political strata atMeso level and at Micro level it catalyzed change in identity of individual.

II. NETWORK ECONOMY AND IT

Information technology being the driving force of contemporary economy and modern life style is the core of modernity. **Castle(1996)** argues that dominant functions and process in the information age are increasingly organized around networks defined as sets of interconnected nodes. Money won and lost here is now far more important than that earned through production processes. The informational society is based on a specific form of organization in which information generation, processing and transmission have become fundamental sources of productivity and capacity (**Castell 1996;21**). The new information economy has transformed the labour market worldwide, leading to greater demand of specific skills. The character of labour undergoes a shift from manual labour to intellectual labour. This is clearly reflected with increasing importance of high skilled labour in the information economy. With growth of global 'Information Economy', the potential of participation of developing nations in the global economic process also increased. In the information economy the sources of productivity lie in the technology of knowledge generation, information processing and symbol communication. As observed by many social theorists, these change in the structure of global economy , in the organization of production and spread of the new ICTs have initiated a fundamental social transformation; that is understood as a new phase or type of modernity; better termed as 'the risk society', 'second modernity', 'reflexive modernity', or the 'network society'. With the increasing flexibility of labour, risk becomes the key organizing principle for work, as workers have to calculate their chances for gaining income under different situation (**Beck, 2000**).This type of work culture is wedded with stretchable working hours, deadline accomplishment, stressful working environment and competition of getting onsite project.

III. GLOBALIZATION, INFORMATIONAL ECONOMY AND WOMEN WORK FORCE

The globalization of economic activity during the last third of the 20th century incorporated millions of women into labor force. The industrial and finance sector which were previously dominated by male workforce are now systematically being replaced by women workers who seem to be doing a commendable jobs as compared to male workforce even at times better than them. Along with the increasing cost of living, for many women, working is an economic necessity in order to support their family. This is supplemented by many government resolutions giving a lot of protection to working women. As an ancillary effect, global development has opened employment opportunity for women of poor third world countries thereby enhancing their social and economic status. As per ILO record 34% of workforce in India were women. Expansion and increased access to higher education has allowed more women to go to college, thus increasing their ability to obtain jobs in banks, BPOs, insurance, IT & ITES and telecom etc. As consequences of this, there happened to be increasing number of women in the service sector workforce.

In this transformed industrial scenario IT sector emerged as most promising avenue for women where knowledge is more important than brute force. This opened the vista of opportunities for women; as a result a large number of educated women preferred IT as their career advancement. However Increasing women employment has also been accompanied with several mental and physical stress while playing multiple role both at profession as well as in family.

IV. ELEMENTS OF STRESS

Modern time has been called the age of 'anxiety and stress' (Coleman, 1976) because of economic imbalances and uncertainties, insecurities in employment, urbanization and other increased socio economic complexities. Stress is caused by a multitude of demands (stressors), such as an inadequate match between what we need and what we are capable of, and what our environment offers and what it demands from us (Levi, 1996). Thus broadly the term 'stress' is used to refer to stressors or perceived stress. This stress exerts a negative influence on the individual, in terms of anxiety, health problems, unable to cope with the workload and deadline set etc. "It may refer to external situational pressures (stressors) or the responses to them (stress reactions)" (Scott and Marshall 2005:640).

The present study attempts to analyse the elements of stress experienced by women working in the newly emerged IT sector located in Mumbai city.

V. EARLIER RESEARCH

IT sector, the sunshine industry has brought a new work environment and sea changes in the employment trends. Service providers characterized this sector by adhering to strict deadlines set by their customers, working in different time zones, interdependency in teams, multitasking, increased interaction with offshore clients and extended work hours. These working conditions lead to high stress in the professionals (Ivancevich et al., 1985). The technological advancements in this sector come up in short span of time with significantly high efficiencies, putting them apart from technology previously/currently in use. Milky and Peltola (1999) in their study on gender perspective suggests that women would report more work family imbalance and women would make more trade off than men especially in work adjustments due to family responsibilities. A women's immediate and extended families along with domestic cultural expectations were perceived to be the biggest stumbling block in combining work and family life. It is also mentioned that the families do not appreciate the demands of the managerial or professional occupation faced by the working women. The IT sector was meant to have emancipator potential for working women on account of the possibility of telecommuting and working flexible hours. However in reality; IT workplaces turned out to give very little room for family time and therefore, did not live up to this promise. Family friendly measures in IT sector were offered more as an imitation of western organizational practices rather than from a genuine concern to enable (women) workers handle work and family responsibilities Mohsin Aziz (2003) investigated the prevalence of organizational role stress among Indian Information Technology employees. Resource Inadequacy emerged as the most potent stressor. With this backdrop the present research is an attempt to study the elements of stress among women IT executives of Mumbai city and its impact on family life.

VI. OBJECTIVE

- a. To understand the nature of stress among women working in IT sector at work place
- b. To find the impact of stress on family life

VII. METHODOLOGY

The sample for this study was selected from seven different information technology organisations. Women comprised at least 30 percent of the work force of this organization. The sample is from Mumbai Metropolitan Region. This region consists of Mumbai City, Mumbai suburbs, Thane and Navi Mumbai. The

survey was restricted to this geographical region in order to get high response rate. To make the sample unbiased and ensure proper representation only those organisations affiliated to NASSCOM and with at least 30% women employees were taken into consideration. Out of them only seven organisations were chosen through non probability convenient sampling.

The survey was conducted mostly through personal interaction to get the questionnaire filled as mailing the questionnaire did not yield any result. The researcher contacted 140 women IT employees and out of that only 100 responded meaningfully to the questionnaire there by making the response of 70%. The following table indicated the demography of sample.

Table No.1

Type of Respondents	No.of Respondents
Married	64
Unmarried	31
Divorcee	05
Average Age	38
Graduate	37
Post Graduate	67
Average Income(INR)(Not CTC)	5 Lakh p.a

The data were analysed taking parameters like working hour, leave facilities, promotional avenue, interpersonal relation and health issues which directly or indirectly lead to stress. The opinion was taken on ratings and average rating was calculated. Then the opinion of respondents were compared to find out their preference / opinion on a particular parameter.

VIII. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

c. Working hours

In this study it was found that IT companies work in five day schedule. The general prescribed working hour is 9 hours per day. But in reality in an average the IT executives work 11 hours per day. This happens because at times, in order to meet deadline of completing project these executives have to stretch the working hours beyond the normal schedule. Further information revealed that one way commuting takes around 2 hours for an IT executive. Hence a women working in IT sector in Mumbai is expected to spend minimum 12 hours per day in matter related to professional life in a normal working condition. In addition to this the women are not exempted from family commitments. This affects the normal family life, lead to both physical and mental exhaustion resulting in stress.

d. Leave Facilities

As per information provided, 83 per cent respondents said that public holidays were available to IT sector employees . 73 per cent of respondents used to avail CL facility and 60 per cent respondents were availing the SL facility. 80 per cent of respondents said that the benefit of maternity leave was available for 3 months. And 50 per cent of respondents told that benefit of unpaid maternity leave was also available. The concept of bereavement leave is relatively new and a small segment of 13 per cent respondents were only beneficiary of it. The varieties of opinion of the respondents on leave facility is because all companies do not follow identical leave policy. For example one company gives 24 days annual leave with a 5 day working system and leave in all public holidays. They do not bifurcate these leaves and can be accumulated and encashed at the time of leaving the organisation.

It is significant to observe that, some IT companies used to bully their employees and denied the leave facility in some form or other as evident from the negative opinion of some respondents. This makes the work scenario more stressful.

e. Promotion

Majority IT companies operating in Mumbai gives promotion to its employees generally after two years. Few companies even take up to four years to give a promotion. At junior level the avenue of promotion is more and it reduces as a person moves up in the hierarchy. The core issue of promotion lies in two factors one by merit and another by favoritism. But majority of (55 per cent) respondent said that favoritism was more as compared to merit (45 per cent respondents). The scenario of promotion in IT sector can be very well interpreted that an element of favoritism is inevitable in addition to minimum level of merit to get a promotion. For career

centric women this scenario brings lot of conflicting situation while dealing with their multiple role in their workplace as well as in family resulting in stress.

f. Interpersonal relation

It is evident from this research that the networking or inter personal relationship is very important to integrate personal and professional life in order to get better result at both the end. The relationship is generally revolved in three dimensions in case of a women IT executive; one with colleagues, one with sub-ordinates and one with superior. For majority of employees the relationship is supportive with their colleagues, sub ordinates and superior. A large minority of respondents are in casual relationship with all. Few are unable to define the relationship. And a small minority of employees find the relationship negative (mostly with their superiors)(Figure 1).

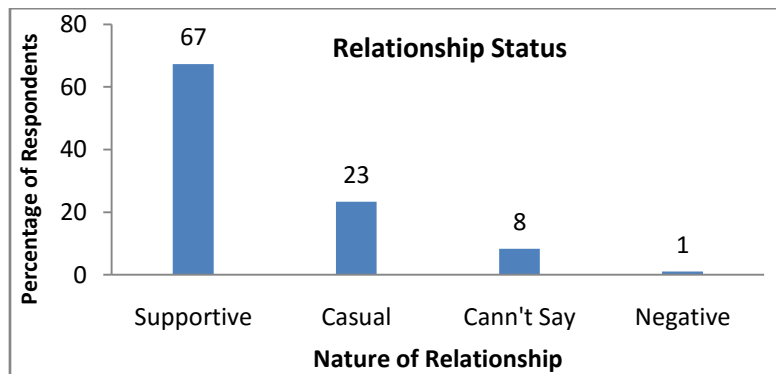


Figure.1

Over all analysis indicated that relationship with superior was not as encouraging as that of others. It means the dissatisfaction level of everyone with their superior might be dicey in some cases. Analysing further it was found that 45% of respondents said that their superior to be supportive whereas 37% said that it depends upon the situation. A small segment constituting 18% of respondents found their superior to be aggressive (Figure 2).

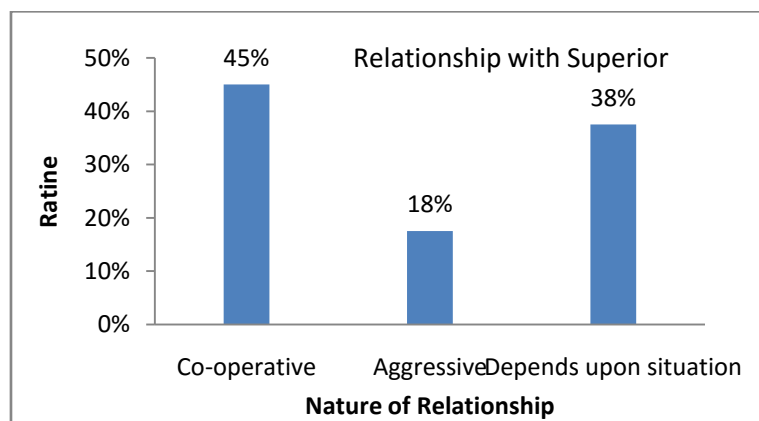


Figure 2

This finding is a clear indication that because of cut throat competition, personality conflict and demanding superior an IT executive is subjected to stress. This is manifested as one third of them either in casual or undefined relationship with everybody and at times in negative relationship with superior. In case of a women employee these all lead to isolation at social life, disturbed family life and high level of imbalance between work and family.

g. Health Issues

The study found that respondents experience some typical health ailments like backache ,headache, irritating eyesight and spondylitis. 65% of respondents are feeling some type of stress. The health complication is primarily related to psychological the repercussion found in mood swing among 50% of respondents. The next health issue is related to backache as observed among 20% of respondents. Loss of concentration(15%

respondents), eye sight problem (10% respondents) and headache (5%) are other three health complications found among IT sector women employees (Figure 3). 65% of respondents are feeling some type of stress. The study also indicated that 48% of respondents experience sleeplessness (Figure 4)

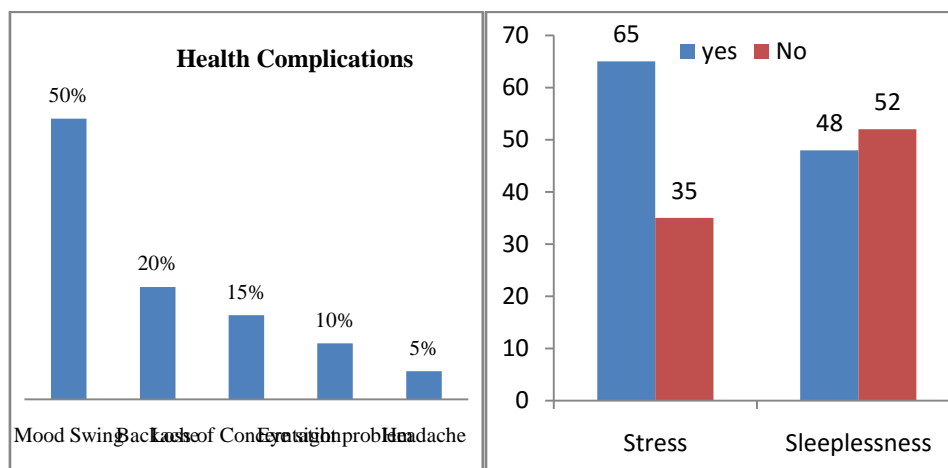


Figure 3

Figure 4

The source of stress is the working pattern of IT sector which is characterized by long working hours, client-deadline oriented approach and continuous pressure to upgrade to match the changing technological scenario. This work scenario of IT sector affects the family life of women employee.

h. Conclusion

In this changing industrial scenario more and more women are joining the IT sector. But the working scenario of Indian IT sector is putting women employees in stress which drastically affect their family life. The present study revealed that in reality, many a time both married and unmarried women were not able to stay in the office for long hours particularly in late evenings unless there was a very much demanding situation. It is because married women have constraint of family responsibilities and for unmarried female it is social disapproval and parental objections. Thus when there is more work pressure or important deadlines to be met, women get more stressed and resultant is failure in balancing work and family life. This is a regular phenomenon in IT companies in Mumbai. When the women takes the career as a priority then there happens to be disastrous repercussion at domestic front as all the family members expect her to play the typical gender role as conditioned in Indian social system. This happens because despite gradual shift in societal attitude and values regarding gender roles in the city, women still shoulder the major responsibilities for family as well as household activities. This very often lead to inter role conflict while playing organizational and non-organizational role. The identical scenario is more prominent in case of married than unmarried women employees.

Having personal time is the biggest challenge for women in IT sector. Their profession has a major influence on their pattern of sociality. Lack of free time to socialize with family members, friends and relatives is a common phenomenon among female executive of Mumbai IT sector because of the nature of their work.

Thus there is a definite need for organisations to devise and invest in strategies that can keep the level of role stress within manageable limit among women employees.

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