Stress and Work/Life Balance among Employees of Manufacturing and IT Sector

Abstract

Issues pertaining to work/life balance and stress and their redressal are not only responsibility of an employer. These issues can only be resolved by adopting collective approach. In order to attain greater professional and personal positions and enjoy the life, individual employee, organizations, family, professional social workers and society all should join their hands. Then only the full potential of individuals and organizations can be realized.

Proper involvement and participation from employees and organizations are required to address the issues of work/life balance and stress, so that a healthy work environment is established and the image and goodwill of the particular organization can spread. On the other side, familial, and social support are expected to strengthen the personal and positiveness of life of an employee.

Employees need to achieve their desired professional goals at the cost of their personal, social and familial responsibilities. Widening the gap between familial demands and responsibilities, cause severe damage on person, family, organizations and society at large. It is always suggested to prevent the larger damage rather than controlling the damage.

Whatever the sector may be, the changes in job and global market, change in economy of the nation, etc. are altering the fabric of individual' life style. The important noticeable job changes are forcing, directly or indirectly, individuals to alter their life which is often beyond their control. Individuals find it very hard to bring adjustments in their personal and professional
life. While trying to balance, generally, people tend to mess-up the issues. Hence, it is the responsibility of the individuals, organizations and the society to take the issues of work/life balance and stress collectively to realize the full potentials and enjoy the life. The current study is an attempt to bring the issues of Work/Life Balance, Occupational Stress and Personal Life Stress among employees of manufacturing and IT sector.

Introduction

The journey of life is full of expectations and surprise turns. These expectations and turns make life more interesting, sometimes stressful. Everybody, in his/her life time, has to experience joyful (positive)/difficult (negative) life events. Ancient civilization and cultures all over the world have their own perception. In Hindu philosophy, these life events, whether positive or negative, termed as *karma* (good or bad). Every man has to perform his/her *karma* without expecting the result. Any life events, bad or good, are considered as fruit of previous *karma*. This philosophical idea strengthens the mindset of man and encourages him/her to face the life events in positive spirit. But, the modern man might have forgotten the positive way of thinking. He/she, usually, runs behind so many things in order to make his /her life luxurious, as a consequence he/she has lost the important thing in life i.e. **peace of mind**.

The struggle starts from the first breath man takes. As a child, he/she has to make series of adjustment with regard to environment, society, etc. As a school going child, the child has to face the series of academic related performance issues (as parents/child would think). As a youth, he/she needs to think about the future. Being a professional, he/she has to undergo
various professional related pressures and as a senior citizen, one has to think about the future of
his/her children. Hence, life is series of adjustments.

People with professional responsibility need to work towards fulfilling professional
responsibilities, primarily, in order to survive, to take care of his/her family, fulfill personal
needs and societal needs, etc. Hence, professional life is an important phase in everyone’s lives.

Stressors include work environment which involves nature of work load, work culture,
peer-group, work conditions, assigned roles and responsibilities, supervisors’ attitude towards an
employee, etc. The outcome of the mis-interaction/mismatch between employees’ perception
and ability perform is known as occupational stress. Hence, occupational stress is defined as the
interaction of nature of work conditions with characteristics of the worker such that the demands
of work exceed the ability of the worker to cope with them (Rose and Altmaier, 2000).

Some may cope with the situations and some may fail to cope with it. Environment/society poses various kinds of events in every ones lives. The environment
factors/issues/stressors, as classified by Asterita (1985), can be categorized into three kinds of
stressors i.e. a. Physical; b. Psychological; and c. Psycho-social stress.

Review of Literature

The concept of work-life balance has gained attention during last decade. In India after
adopting LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization), every organization wants to
remain in the business for long time which creates huge competition for organizations. When an
organization wants to increase its business/achieve its organizational goals, organizations demand more work from its employees and employees are forced to align their personal goals along with the organizational goals, which will disturb the balance between professional and life. Hence, maintaining a proper work/life balance policy is an essential quality of an organization.

Guha and Chimote (2012) have rightly mentioned that an adaptable work/life policy could be beneficial to employer and employees. The policies should provide the employees to fulfill their professional expectations as well as family expectations. But, for some authors, the imbalance or an effort to bring the balance between profession and personal life issues is a sort of conflict between the two dimensions.

Work/life Balance does not mean striking a perfect balance between work and personal life. It is more about spending qualitative time and having the feeling of well-being. One cannot clearly divide the issues affecting the work and personal life. These two are interdependent. Striking the perfect balance always depends on various issues like one’s perception of success and failure in life and developing strategies to bring balance between achieving organizational goals and personal goals. Hence, work/life balance can be understood as to state where an individual manages real or potential conflict between different demands on his/her time and energy in a way that satisfies his/her needs for well-being and self-fulfillment (Clutterbuck, 2013).

Sinha (2013) has undertaken a study to find Work/Life Balance related issues and how to maintain a proper Work/Life Balance policy is helpful in increasing level of production and job
satisfaction. Data have been obtained from 100 employees of Continental Carbon India Ltd., by adopting convenience sampling method. The findings of this study indicates that employees who were more favourable toward their organization’s efforts to support work-life balance also indicated a much lower intent to leave the organization, greater pride in their organization, a willingness to recommend it as a place to work and higher overall job satisfaction.

Gupta and Charu (2013) have examined the impact of Work/Life Balance on job satisfaction of employees of IT sector. Data have been collected from 100 employees by adopting convenience sampling method. A self-prepared questionnaire has been administered. Chi-square result shows that Work/Life Balance and burnout affects the job satisfaction among employees in IT sector.

The issues of organizational structure and Work/Life Balance have been addressed by Doble and Supriya (2010). In their study researchers have mentioned that the employees do appreciate the organizational efforts in providing a supportive work environment which enhance Work/Life Balance. For this purpose, two forms of supportive work environment are assessed, viz. support from boss and support from team members and colleagues. A supportive environment is instrumental in reducing work life conflict. Many of the respondents admit that they get support from their team members (60% male and 71% women) at the work place. As many as 54% of the men and 63% of women acknowledge the support from their boss. The Chi square test shows that the impact of a supportive work environment is independent of gender, thereby indicating that a supportive work environment reduces work life imbalance across genders.
During last two decades, world has witnessed the tremendous growth of industries and with increased work demand of the employees to perform, beyond one’s ability. When an employee is failed to cope up with these demands, he/she would be showed the gate. This high work demand poses a great amount of burden on the shoulders of employees. A person is capable of only so much stress at any given point, so that too much change will result in some negative consequences, such as illness or psychiatric distress (Streiner et al, 1981).

Many times, variations in professional life may increase the stress of a person in personal life such as job insecurity. Job insecurity has been considered as a major factor for occupational stress. Heaney et al (1994) have taken up a longitudinal study of 207 automobile manufacturing workers. Authors intended to study the effects of job insecurity among workers in automobile manufacturing industries. A self-constructed questionnaire was used to collect the data relating to physical and mental health. Regression Analysis was used to analyze the data. Authors have found that extended periods of job insecurity decrease job satisfaction and increase physical symptomatology.

Job insecurity not only affects the professional life but it also affects the personal health. Kalil et al (2009) conducted a longitudinal study to find out the association between job insecurity and change over time in the physical and psychological health of 190 men and women. Chicago Health, Aging and Social Relations Study (CHASRS) were used as instruments for data collection. The collected data were analyzed by using Multivariate Regression Analysis. Authors have found that men who experienced job insecurity rate themselves in significantly poorer physical health and have higher blood pressure and higher levels of urinary
catecholamines compared with men who do not experience job insecurity and women who do. Women who experience job insecurity showed higher depressive symptoms and report stress compared with women who do not experience job insecurity and men who do.

**Fries** (2009) has rightly stated that in today’s work environment there is increasing instability and uncertainty leading to greater stress. The negative effects caused by job insecurity and layoffs are more prominent and seem to dominate the news each day, sometimes with tragic outcomes as murder and suicide.

**Manzoor et al** (2012) have taken up a study to investigate the impact of work stress on job performance. Authors have obtained data from 150 textile employees in Faisalabad by adopting random sampling method. A self-prepared questionnaire were administered to obtain information with regard to job stress, support at work, pressure at work, job insecurity, long work hours, family life, and job performance. The results show that the stress levels among employees in textile sector of Faisalabad is high in certain areas like work overload and long work hours, effect on family life, pressure at work, **job insecurity**, and physical agents.

Personal Life Stress (PLS), generally known as Life Events, is a common factor in everyone’s life. If a person does not have stress, he/she may not be existing. The effect of stress on professional life is unavoidable. The present day life scenario has made individuals to expand their abilities/capabilities beyond their reach. In this context, the researcher has noticed some of the issues of personal life stress or negative life events and has reviewed the extent of effectiveness related to the concerned issues.
Many authors have tried to explain the self with different perspectives. Pastey and Aminbhavi (2006) have tried to explain the concept of self and personal life stress of adolescents from the perspective of Emotional Maturity and Self Confidence. In the present study three scales have been adopted such as Emotional Maturity Scale, Self-Confidence Inventory and Students’ Stress Scale. The data have been secured from 105 adolescent students studying in XI and XII class and belonging to Commerce College from Dharwad, Karnataka. This study contained five hypotheses. Statistical tools such as ‘t’ test and ANOVA have been used to test the hypotheses. The study has revealed those adolescents with high emotional maturity have significantly higher stress and self-confidence than those with lower emotional maturity. Sex of the adolescents does not have an influence their stress and self-confidence. Having more number of siblings has influenced positively the self-confidence of adolescents when compared to those having less number of siblings. Whereas number of siblings, does not have significant influence on their stress. Order of birth of adolescents has no significant impact on their stress and self-confidence. Varying educational level of the adolescents’ fathers have significant influence on the stress, while the educational level of parents does not influence the self-confidence in adolescent children. Income of family has insignificant impact on the stress and self-confidence of adolescents.

Sood et al (2013) have made an attempt to explore the self and personal life stress based on how people perceive stress, resilience and the status of mental health of adolescents. Study reveals found that adolescents having higher levels of resilience had shown lesser mental health problems and better psychological well-being, emotional ties, and general positive affect. This could be indicative of the role that resilience plays in safeguarding mental health of those who
are residing in edge of the development of mental health problems. Future studies might be focused on assessment of resilience as a predictor of mental health in adolescents living in border areas or in similar stressful conditions.

The perception of self and personal life stress from professional point of view varies. Grebner et al (2004) have conducted a study to find impact of stressful situations at work and in private life among young workers. About 1394 workers have been selected for the study and have investigated the frequency and conduct of stressful situations among job newcomers, and occurrence of stressful events in different settings of daily life at work and in private life. For this purpose, participants of the study have been asked to document every stressful situation they experienced, both minor and major, over a seven day period. An open ended description of the situation instrument and situational well-being, coping strategies and coping success instruments have been used. Data were analyzed by applying Regression Analysis and Multilevel Analysis. The authors have found that events related to private life affect the professional life events such as problems with time and activities, problems with defective products and interruptions of activities. Authors have concluded that private events had more impact than work-related events. Further, the in-depth study in the same area was taken up by Imtiaz and Ahmad (2009). The authors were intended to study the effects of personal life stress on employee performance, managerial responsibility and consequences of high stress. Self-constructed questionnaire was used to collect data (N: 78). Authors have found negative relationship between personal life stress and job performances and they also found that increase in personal dilemmas will decrease the professional activities.
Research Methodology

The purpose of the study is to measure and understand the Work/Life Balance of employees of manufacturing and IT sector in Bangalore.

As many as 15 IT and 15 manufacturing companies which have workforce of 500 and above on the roll have been identified for the study. Permission has been accorded by three IT and three manufacturing companies to carry out the study. While identifying the respondents, criteria mentioned below have been adopted. They are:

1. Employees who have a minimum of two years of work experience in the same organization, and
2. Employees who are on permanent rolls in the cadre of an executive.

A list of employees who have fulfilled the above criteria has been prepared in all the organizations. One hundred employees each of manufacturing and IT companies form the subjects for the study.

Tools used

The researcher has adopted three scales to measure occupational stress, work/life balance and personal life stress.

Work/Life Balance Scale (WLBS)

Work and life are two sides of responsibilities that employees have to adapt to. Work/life affects personal life that includes family life and at the same time personal and family life affects
the work/life. A balance is always desirable for the employees to function effectively in both the spheres.

To assess and diagnose the work-life balance of employees, the researcher adopted Work-Life Balance Scale, developed by Pareek and Purohit (2010). This scale consists of 36 items and each with five alternate responses. While some items are negative, others are positive in conveying the response. This is to avoid mechanical way of filling up the inventory. The scale covers six different dimensions.

**Occupational Stress Index (OSI)**

Stress is a condition which overruns one’s capacity/ability to perform. Stress has become an integral part of profession and no employee can escape from the clutches of stress. Organizations are striving hard to evolve stress management programmes to prepare the employees to cope more effectively with stress. It does not mean that stress is always negative, sometimes stress produces constructive results and motivates the person to be functional. In the absence of adequate level of stress, life would be dull and stress beyond the level of one’s capacity wrecks individual functional ability.

With this perspective, the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) developed by Srivastava and Singh (1981) is adopted to measure the occupational stress of employees. This scale purports to measure the extent of stress which employees perceive arising from various constituent and conditions of their job. The scale consists of 46 items, each to be rated on the five point scale. Out of 46 items, 28 are ‘true-keyed’ and rest 48 are ‘false-keyed’ items. The items related to almost all relevant components of job life which cause stress in some way or the other.

[11]
The tool may conveniently be administered, as questionnaire, to the employees of every level operating in the context of industries. However, it would prove more suitable for the employees of supervisor level and above. Since the questionnaire of both true-keyed and false-keyed items of two different patterns of scoring have to be adopted for two types of items. The following table provides guide line to score the responses given to two categories of items.

**Personal Life Stress**

The events which occur in one’s life may create stress. These conditions may be termed as stressors. The events may affect every aspects of life including professional life. Under stressful situations, people may not be able to focus on their daily activities of life. The events which occur in life is also termed as ‘life stress’, ‘emotional stress’, ‘object stress’, or ‘negative life events’, which may lead the person to lose his/her concentration on professional/personal life.

To explore the link between occupational stress and personal life stress, researcher adopted Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS), developed by Holmes and Rahe (1967). This scale consists of a list of 43 life events. Each life event has been given specific values which indicate the extent of stress as a result of event, and the total score ranges from 0 to above 300. Higher score indicates higher level of personal stress. This scale administered as check-list.
Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction of the chosen topic of research and cover conceptual frame work of the topic. The second chapter provides survey and review of concerned literature, and emphasized more on the latest literature. The third chapter focuses on the methodology adopted for the study. The fourth chapter represents the data of the findings in suitable tabular form with statistical explanation and discussion. The fifth chapter is discussed with logical/causal relation of factors conclusion and suggestions for further studies.

Findings:
The analysis has unraveled the following findings for further discussion:

1. There was no significant mean difference in Work/Life Balance score between employees of manufacturing and IT sector.

2. There was no significant mean difference in Work/Life Balance score between male and female employees.

3. There exists significant positive correlation between age and Work/Life Balance.

4. There exists significant positive correlation between experience and Work/Life Balance.

5. There exists significant mean difference in Occupational Stress score between employees of manufacturing and IT sector with employees of IT sector having high Occupational Stress.

6. There was no significant mean difference in Occupational Stress score between male and female employees of manufacturing and IT sector.

7. There exists significant negative correlation between age and occupational stress.
8. There exists significant negative correlation between experience and occupational stress.

9. There was no significant mean difference in Personal Life Stress score between employees of manufacturing and IT sector.

10. There was no significant mean difference in Personal Life Stress score between male and female employees of manufacturing and IT sector.

11. There exists significant negative low correlation between age and Personal Life Stress.

12. There exists significant negative low correlation between experience and Personal Life Stress.

13. There exist significant negative correlation between Work/Life balance and Occupational stress, \( r = -0.556 \), at 5% levels.

14. There was no significant negative correlation between Work/Life balance and Personal life stress, \( r = -0.136 \), at 5% levels.

15. There exist significant negative correlation between Personal life stress and Occupational stress, \( r = -0.556 \), at 5% levels.

**Suggestions for Employers/Organizations**

Organizations need to adopt suitable problem identification system to check genuine cases of work/life balance and stress related issues and try to resolve the issues. Instead of appointing an extra personnel for this, it is better to identify supervisors/managers, especially senior most persons, are to be sensitized about psychological aspects of employees. It is better to identify a volunteer for this purpose in every department/unit because it is cost effective and consume less time.
Organizations should make sure that positive/conducive work environment is established. Negative interpersonal conflicts/issues have to be addressed immediately. If unaddressed, these issues may create severe problems and can damage the image of an organization. Hence, workshops/seminars are to be organized to widen the thinking horizon of employees so that a cordial and professional relationship is maintained.

Certain extra care and facilities are to be provided for women workforce. Any misbehavior, unacceptable behaviour/gesture within or outside of the organization towards women employees, need to be resolved strictly. Organizations should provide protective measures to women workforce. Male workforce is to be sensitized about the issues related to women and treat them with respect and dignity.

It is suggested to develop work timings and workloads logically and scientifically so that employees do not feel overloaded with projects. Organizations are under immense pressure to deliver the goods and time is money for them. While assigning work/project/s organizations must think about the existing work/project/s assigned to them already. IT organizations have a tendency to keep extra manpower on bench which can be supplied immediately as and when situation arised. But, the same cannot be suggested to manufacturing organizations.

While recruiting fresher, organizations should have clear recruiting policy which allow the recruiting authority to select and recruit the candidates who have skills and potentials to perform and handle work-related stress. Along with personal interviews, group discussions,
personality assessment tests, ability to work with teams and attitude, etc. can be used as criteria for selection.

It is observed by the researcher that most of the organizations selected for this study do not have clear policy framework with regard to work/life balance and occupational stress. Hence, it is suggested that organizations need to frame policy to organize stress management techniques programmes, training programmes, workshops, seminars etc. to empower the employees to tackle the issues related to work/life balance and stress.

It is suggested that organizations need to identify the senior/experienced/aged managers and train them as mentors and counselors so that personal and informal guidance can be provided to employees who need the services.

It is observed by the researcher that IT organizations has provided certain facilities such as telecommuting, work from home, meetings through tele-conference, etc. The nature of the work itself is flexible and these facilities are inevitable to meet the clients’ demands. Manufacturing organizations can not have the above mentioned facilities due to the work nature.

**Suggestions for Individual Employees**

Time and tide do not wait for nobody. Hence, time once lost never come back. So, one should manage the time properly. Fail to utilize the time optimally can cause stress. In this sense, it is suggested to have a time table for every activity, whether professional or personal, and stick to that plan. Time management is a skill and not difficult to acquire but requires lot of
trial and error approach. Once adopted than taste of utilizing can be tasted. The similar suggestion has been given by Kofoworda and Alayode (2012).

In daily professional and personal life, individuals have number of activities to perform. Before taking up any activity one should clarify certain doubts such as – a) is it very important; b) is it necessary/urgent; c) is it worth, etc. If the answer is yes than such activities are to be carried out immediately. Hence, it is suggested to prioritize the works/activities/tasks/assignments according to the nature of activities.

Individuals require some time to address the body and mental needs. If left unaddressed, severe consequences can occur to body and mind. People say if the physiology of the body is healthy than mind is also healthy. It has been experiential by the researcher that most of the respondents do not find it important to engage in some kind of physical activities. Majority of the respondents spend more time in computers. This results in certain ailments such as fatigue, blood pressure, diabetes, etc. These ailments can be prevented by doing physical exercise. To keep mental balance, individuals need to adopt certain steps such as listening to music, reading etc. so that mental fitness can be maintained.

Unhealthy competition disturbs the interpersonal relationship with other. It is true that everyone tries to reach the top level of professional and personal ladder. While trying this, one should pull up others instead of pushing them down. Unhealthy trend towards colleagues leaves bitterness in their mind which is not advisable. Hence, one should try to compete in healthy manner.
Any activity, whether professional or personal, requires team effort. Cordial interpersonal relationship is required to be in the team. Hence, individuals and organizations make sure that team member support and help and assist each other, so that their professional and personal goals can be achieved.

Employees need to take-out some quality time to spend with family members, friends, etc. This would help the individuals to relax their mind. It is suggested to have a vacation once in six months. While applying for vacations, one should make sure that the vacation is properly planned. Before going for vacation, one should have their substitute in their place.

Relaxing techniques such as yoga, meditation, breathing exercise, painting, reading and cooking can be used as stress busters in order to relax the body and mind. Spa, body massage, aroma therapy, etc. facilities have been provided by certain IT organizations on payment basis.

While trying to balance between work and personal life and reduce stress, certain foods such as fatty and junk food, food with high calories, meat, deep fried snacks, alcohol, excess tea/coffee, etc need to be avoided. Healthy life style has to be adopted. One should consult a doctor once in six months. So that a proper health can be maintained. Proper support from family members, colleagues, friends, supervisors/manages, subordinates can sought in identifying the cause of stress/work life imbalance and resolve the problems.
Suggestions for employees and employers from social work point of view

The social functioning of an individual may get affected by several factors such as personal, social, physical, financial, occupational and other factors. The consequence of this would hinder an individual to perform his/her role and responsibilities at workplace and home, which in turn affect the organizational overall performance.

Social work interventions can be effectively utilized which enhances the ability and social functioning of individuals. Hence, the below mentioned suggestions have been offered to employees and employers/organizations to maintain a better balance between work and life and reduce the stress from social work point of view.

Counseling service can be provided to create awareness about industrial accidents and injuries, absenteeism, low performance, lack of interest, low self esteem and motivation, effects of alcohol, etc.

Conclusion

India is witnessing an increase in capital investment resulting in huge demand for manpower. Talented and skilled people are optimistic with regard to job opportunities. This positive aspect of economic growth enable the workforce to actively engage in production activities in an organization.
Organizations in order to compete with the other organizations, promote their employees to extend their capacity beyond the limit. This affects the mental, social and familial equilibrium of a person. This situation has become common phenomenon in an era of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG). Due to this, number of people who seek professional help is improving.