CHAPTER VI
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The study has attempted to draw insights on the present work status of women executives in Chennai, Tamilnadu, India. The findings indicate that moderate level of stress is prevalent among women executives across IT, ITES, Manufacturing and service sectors in Chennai. The study also draws the relationship between Organisational role stress, job satisfaction and quality of work life. When organizational role stress was high, job satisfaction and quality of work life was found to be low showing the significant relationship between the three variables depending on the sectors to which the respondents belong to.

The first part of this chapter focuses on the recommendations with a focus on improving the satisfaction association with the job and the quality of work life of the respondents. This is possible by reducing the organizational role stress which is a significant variable in the study. Indicators for future research have also been outlined. The second part of the chapter presents an intervention model based on social work, where professional social workers can apply their theoretical concepts and methods of social work to strengthen the skills of the individuals and teams in dealing with issues that interfere with their personal and professional life.

6.1 Recommendations

1. Organisational role stress and job satisfaction have a strong, but negative relationship. Managements should keep this in mind while making policy decisions. If companies want to achieve high level of satisfaction, the stress level should be kept minimum in executives. The definition of quality of work life differs from individual to individual. So ‘one size fits for all’ will not work out. Industry specific, customized techniques should be used.
2. Regular stress audits at the work place, adequate tolerance towards the socio cultural, economic back ground of the employees, availability of a counselor at the work place, referral services, workshops to boost up positive thinking, motivation etc can help the employees to achieve positive mental health. A positive perception and attitude can go a long way in enhancing one’s coping skills to combat stress. Effort and directed determination can change the attitude of a person.

3. A preventive approach towards Stress management should be adopted by way of employee wellness programs. The nature of work in IT, ITES, Manufacturing and service sectors are different in terms of the physical and mental exertion that it requires. Sometimes the work turns out to be monotonous and involves drudgery. When their needs are not fulfilled, employees experience lower satisfaction towards work and lesser commitment. The women employees were found to be less satisfied with their work due to their family commitment, conflicting roles, mobility issues etc leading to lesser commitment, lesser satisfaction and higher intent to quit. Family friendly policies are likely to enhance job satisfaction of employees. Organisation climate surveys, satisfaction index and exit interviews offer clues about the morale of employees in general and satisfaction of employees in particular, contributing towards organizational productivity. Rewarding the supervisors for creating and maintaining a satisfied team would help in establishing healthy peer relationships.

4. It is an organizational and HR imperative to direct gender diversity efforts away from merely filling of boardrooms and building up the talent pipeline.
5. The organizations need to be aware of ways of management of role related stress. For example, role stagnation can be reduced by motivating and rewarding employees for better performance. By improving the interdependence between related roles, role isolation can be overcome. Role Ambiguity can be reduced through interventions based on job analysis which clearly describes the role.

6. Women need to be identified, mentored and trained in the first 3-4 years of their career. Career maps should be created and address barriers to their career. This can build up the talent pipeline, create a pool of role models for aspiring women, and retain the knowledge base of such talented women. Role clarity should be ensured through realistic job previews and job rotations which would enhance skill development in the employees.

7. Process based role analysis and design (PROBRAD), a practical and user friendly organization development intervention can be used for role enrichment of the employees (Srivastav 2007). Role enrichment removes drudgery resulting from monotonous work. Analysing and designing the role based on the process or function handled by the employees, involving them, would save time and enable the employees to have enriched roles.

8. Selecting volunteers to be trained in basic workplace counseling skills to deal with emergency management of stress related issues can resolve professional problems at the workplace, as soon as they arise. This effort of small group of trained volunteers can act like quality circles, and prevent minor stress issues from developing into complicated issues.

9. Employers should understand the needs of the women employees and weave schemes recognizing their career life stages. Women have certain biological needs and reproductive challenges which may disturb the career life. They may be put in dilemma to choose
between the worth of career and motherhood which men do not face. Organisations should prepare programs that facilitate career reentry, become mentors to others while managing home and career. The performance rating system should be designed accordingly to facilitate their career reentry.

10. Concern for personal safety is a vital stressor for women at work. There are companies that provide coping skills training with programmes related to self defense. Such programs boost up the self efficacy while they exercise self defense.

11. Employee Assistance programs (EAP) are designed to assist employees with performance problems. It is a bridge between employees and employers as it attempts equip the employees to solve their work issues which enhances both the individual and organizational productivity. It should be properly implemented rather than making it based on voluntary participation of employees. Managers and supervisors should be trained to understand such work related issues and help their employees. Diagnosing the cause of the problem of an employee should be left to professionals like trained Psychologists and professional Social workers.

12. Employee Wellness programs are designed to prevent health problems by incorporating a fitness regimen along with awareness on nutrition and health. Companies should realize that the best way to reduce health care cost is to keep the employees healthy. Incentives can attract people who do not want to use Wellness programs focused on improving the health style of the employees. Periodic health check up for employees and spouses, planning of exercise regimen, diet counseling, weight management, stress reduction, smoking cessation and the like can improve the morale of the employees.
13. The organizations should conduct minor research studies on the behaviour of its executives along with stress audits and employee satisfaction surveys at regular intervals.

14. The linkages between work, career, marriage, child bearing and rearing need to be considered. A comparison of the career stages and family stages should be made for couples as partners by the organizations and specific child care packages can be devised.

6.2 Directions for future research

- The present study gives an overall view on organisational role stress, quality of work life and job satisfaction among women executives in IT, ITES, manufacturing and service sectors in and around Chennai region. It is very important to do more focused Indepth studies on how organizational role stress affects the mental health of the individuals, its impact on the family, community, and overall quality of life of the individuals.

- Qualitative research on the cultural changes in the society and its impact on employed women, role reversals in the family, type of family, marital status etc can go a long way in developing effective intervention models to help women employees.

- A comparative study on women professionals belonging to different designations encompassing other segments of the industry would build up the literature base for inddepth studies in future.

- Longitudinal studies on the relation between age, experience and career stages of women and Organizational role stress, quality of work life and job satisfaction would enable us to devise strategies matching the career stages and in orientating the women employees to prepare themselves to face issues that are likely to emerge in future.
• There is a need for cross national Collaboration among Organisational researchers to further understand the nature of Organisational role stress, its various facets, psychological strain and its effects on the valued work outcomes in dissimilar cultural and national contexts. This would enable Multinational corporations to design Employee assistance programmes to suit different cultural milieu.

• Publication of case studies on the effectiveness of social work intervention in industries and multinational corporations would contribute in the development of suitable competency mapping required for social work professionals to work in the industry. This would also help in popularizing the concept of Social work intervention in industries.

• Based on the current study, a comparative study on the organizational role stress, quality of work life and job satisfaction of the male executives from the similar sectors would help to document the gender differentials on the above mentioned variables.

6.3 Implications for Social Work practice

Social work as a profession aims at helping the individuals to help themselves. It enables the people to fight against odds and devise innovative methods of intervention in dealing with people in need of help. It thus focuses on improving the quality of life of people. Quality of work life and quality of life are two sides of the same coin. A satisfied individual would enjoy a good quality of work and personal life.

The role of counselors in industries has been recognized by the industries and society at large. The principles of individuality, acceptance, non judgmental attitude, controlled emotional involvement and the like have wide significance in industry. Principles of Group work and Case work has its application in most of the
employee engagement activities, mentoring and coaching with an objective to foster team spirit and ‘We’ feeling. Knowledge about work environment in industrial settings can enable the counselors in enhancing the quality of intervention in industries.

A major challenge for human resource professionals lie in dealing with attrition, absenteeism, grievance handling, competency building, alleviating stress, enhancing job satisfaction and quality of work life. From induction to exit interview, the human resource manager faces lot of challenges in their day to day work life. Knowledge about methods of social work practice comes handy in dealing with individuals, teams and community both within and outside the organization, in diagnosing the issues, charting a plan of action and implementing it.

Organizational socialization is a significant arena in the life of any organization as the efforts to align the employee goals and organizational roles start at this point. The seeds of employee engagement, We feeling, morale, understanding about the culture, mission and vision of the organization happens here. The social worker/ HR personnel can be an effective socializing agent in the organizational set up as the first learning has a lasting impression. This is the best tool to boost up organizational citizenship behavior which also focuses on improving the interpersonal behavior of the employees.

Findings from Indepth Interviews with the respondents and their Colleagues

As the study is spread over various sectors, interesting facts were unearthed. In the manufacturing sector in and around Chennai region, two types of organizations could be seen. One set who continue to uphold the traditional mind set and accept changes very slowly and another set of multinational corporations who use a blend of traditional and contemporary techniques to deal with issues. For example, the manufacturing sector has a number of companies where ‘Anti Sexual Harassment Committee’ is the most significant and recent trend (less than two years) taking an active role in organizations that employ women. The committee members sit and discuss the issues related to sexual harassment and suggest suitable actions. It
focuses on interacting with women and giving awareness on their legal rights, the need to raise voice and sensitize about the support services available. If regular programs were conducted to men to sensitize them about the implications of sexual harassment, that would have helped in reducing untoward incidents to a great extent. Organisations are awakening towards this reality. Women being less in number lack confidence in raising a harassment issue in the manufacturing set up for fear of job loss. Whereas in the IT, ITES sector, as more women are employed, they feel confident and question harassment with less fear. Sanctioning of policies related to women seem to take some time in traditional organizations whereas in multinational corporations the decisions are very quick. When sanction is immediate, implementation is also immediate. Thus within the manufacturing sector itself one can see companies following both traditional and contemporary outlook which acts as a hindrance is in many occasions.

In the case of Information technology and Information technology enabled services, the anti sexual harassment committee is existing for more than five years and is very active contrary to those in the manufacturing sector which is still in its infancy. The focus now is on Employee Assistance Programs along with thrust on Employee Wellness programs and Employee Empowerment programs. In the manufacturing sector, Counseling does not happen in the real sense of the profession and is often misunderstood and handled by non professionals.

The IT giants in Tamilnadu who were covered in the study had all the above mentioned programs whereas in the manufacturing sector, many of these initiatives were unheard of. Women employees still, do suffer from job insecurity post maternity, marital issues, gender stereotypes, glass ceiling and the like in the manufacturing sector, more than the IT sector. There are very less number of women in the executive level compared to those in the IT, ITES and service sectors. There are several reasons for the same. In the IT, ITES sector, the business is customer driven. The customer can ask for Request for Information (RFI) in which they enquire about the women population in the organisation, the functions that they handle, the number of women in the particular team who is entrusted with the project, whether the organization has initiatives / policies for minority community,
women, lesbian, gay and transgenders, support for child care, elder care and whether
the organization follows diversity policy. These are significant in snatching the
project and the IT, ITES companies gain the overall score if they give weightage to
the customer needs. So the significance given to women’s employment is also
customer driven and has a business mandate in it.

In the manufacturing sector, the customer has no such roles as the end
product passes through different stakeholders and the end customer cannot dictate
terms on the stakeholders and employees who were involved in the making of the
product. Women are less preferred in many manufacturing processes (except those
organizations that are women driven and those which require specific skill set of
women) and the intake is rather restricted to executive levels. Contrary to this the IT
and ITES companies are the largest employers of women in different verticals and
hence have specific programs to support the multiple roles that she handles. This
speaks about the wide difference in the programs that are at offer in both the sectors
to support women work force.

‘Maternity’, a crucial stage in the lifecycle of a woman employee is
supported with options like child care break upto one year without pay, sufficient
nursing breaks, opportunity to store breast milk, initiatives to facilitate career reentry
of women in the IT sector. In the manufacturing sector, such facilities are a rarity
and many women take a long break in career post maternity and may not revert to
work at all. In the service sector, due to the physical strain involved in retail sector,
many women find it difficult to return, post maternity. Attrition rate was also found
to be prominent in service sector as opined by the HR executives.

The stigma attached with seeking the help of counselor is diminishing”,
says an HR professional who handles ‘Employee Empowerment’ in a giant IT
company. Employees do understand and take the help of a professional counselor at
his office or in a coffee shop or in any other convenient location and seeks help.
Absolute confidentiality and accessibility enables employees to use the Employee
Assistance programs with ease. Companies like One to One help.net offer
professional counseling services to corporates and confidentiality is ensured. Except
the number of employees who utilized the services and the gamut of problems that
they face which interferes with the work station, no other information is brought to
the attention of the employers.

‘Employee empowerment’ is another area that deserves mention. Operationally, empowerment refers to the employees ability to take decisions in the realm of work aligning to the organizational expectations in the IT sector. No specific model is followed in the organizations covered in the study to empower its employees. In the manufacturing sector, with less number of women employees, empowerment loses its existence.

Employee Wellness initiatives are existing in a diminished form in manufacturing sector restricted to monitoring of calorific intake, regular annual checkup for employees and the like. In IT, ITES sectors, initiatives like ‘Hale’, ‘Hale & Healthy’, ‘Fit for life’, undertake a gamut of activities ranging from diet counseling to marathons, to yoga, meditation etc.

Safety of women employees is gaining significance due to the media reports on a woman professional who was killed while returning from office without security, in Chennai. Tata Consultancy Services has ‘Safety first’ as the agenda for the year 2014 and runs training programs for all the employees to safeguard themselves. Utilising Cab services with escort after 8.30 pm for women employees and restriction on two wheeler travel after 8.30 pm has recorded a significant reduction in the accident rates, observed an IT employee.

The work culture of the IT, ITES, manufacturing and service sectors are different. Attendance by way of biometric or punching is indispensable in the manufacturing sector while no such strict rules are laid down in the IT,ITES sector except the stipulated working time in certain functions. Flexi time, telecommuting, remote working etc are possible in IT,ITES sectors, whereas in manufacturing sector and service sector, it is impossible. These differences prevent the researcher from devising a ‘One size fits for all’ model of intervention. The need of the hour is to
customize the strategies based on the demand and number of women employed in the sector.

6.4 Social Work Intervention model

As depicted in the figure 6.4.1, women anticipate less stressful life and better quality of work life. They are ambitious and want to enjoy their work life. How can it be achieved? Based on the findings, the issues surrounding women are depicted below.

Figure 6.4.1: depicting the needs of women executives

Source: Developed by the Researcher based on the findings of the study.

Irrespective of the sector, women should be able to achieve what she wants in the career realm. Though the women employees belong to different sectors, work profiles and work demands, the unifying parameter is that they have to handle multiple roles. In the present study, the researcher has identified ten role stressors that add to her woes irrespective of the sector that she belongs to.

Keeping roles in mind, the researcher has identified Role isolation as the most prominent stressor followed by personal inadequacy and role ambiguity. In
other words, lack of linkage of one’s role with that of other roles in the organization, lack of preparation to be effective in a particular role and lack of clarity about expectations from others from the role are the prominent factors that create role stress and undermines the job satisfaction and quality of work life of the respondents covered in the study. So if one is able to tackle these three significant stressors confirmed by this descriptive diagnostic study, the satisfaction with job, expected career progression and quality of work life would naturally follow. The following figure illustrates the stressors, ways to manage them and the expected outcomes in a nutshell.

**Figure 6.4.2: depicting the major stressors, their management and the expected outcomes.**

Source: Developed by the Researcher based on the findings of the study

As evident from the Figure 6.4.2, the establishment of social networks/social support groups would enable the employee to establish linkages with that of other roles, competency building through training and development and clear job descriptions to allay role ambiguity would bring out the expected outcomes.
How do we achieve this outcome as some organizations have certain programs while others do not have such programs to work with the employees? Employee Assistance Program is the most effective panacea in this situation.

As laid down by Employee Assistance Professionals Association [EAPA], (2009), (EA) is a multidisciplinary field with a strong value placed on collaborative work relationships with other professionals and paraprofessionals within the workplace. Social workers can work well in Employee assistance programs due to their professional exposure to systems theory and their application of the person-in-environment, or person-in-work-environment, perspective within an ecological framework (Zastrow, 2009).

As laid down by Jacobson. I.M, and Janet Hosford Lamb. J (2008), Employee assistance programs are a perfect tool in the hands of social workers to support vulnerable employees in troubled work stations. It translates social work ideals into business terms and develop them into initiatives that can improve productivity, work place safety and overall organizational and employee health and wellness. NASW (2008) advocates the legislations designed to improve workplace safety provisions, labour relations etc. The following model proposes the intervention by trained social workers in EAP.

In the following Figure, 6.4.3 EAP stands for employee assistance programs, EW stands for employee wellness programs and EE stands for employee empowerment programs. EAP implementation can be effectively handled by the social worker trained in various methods of social work. Though in manufacturing and service sectors, all the above mentioned programs do not bear the same name, they do exist in less significant forms. For example, EAP is done through referrals, Employee empowerment is done through training in self development, and EW is done through yoga, diet counseling etc. The social worker can identify the areas that need more thrust and work with the employees and family members on a micro practice level; train managers, organizational leaders, and other employees on a meso practice level; and promote integration of community, society and legislative policy on a macro practice level (Jacobson & Hosford Lamb, 2008).
Figure 6.4.3 Depicting the role of a social worker in implementing EAP programs in Organisations

Source: Developed by the researcher.

Based on this, the researcher proposes the following model.

Figure 6.4.4 Representing the Social work intervention model in organisations

Source: Developed by the researcher.
In tune with Jacobson & Hosford Lamb, (2008), with modifications, to suit the present study, the researcher proposes to start working on Organisational socialization which is the first contact for newly joined employees. Effective socialization can reduce role stress by matching the expectations of the individual with that of the organization. Alignment of individual goals to organizational goals can take place at this stage. At the micro level, work among the peers/team members can build awareness on the need to have Employee assistance programs to deal with issues like role stressors should take place. Training of the supervisors/managers to be gender sensitive at the meso level, and aiming for policy changes should happen the macro level. This model would be suitable for manufacturing and service sectors where there are a number of women employees in need of support and they do not have any formal systems in practice for Employee assistance programs, Employee empowerment and Employee Wellness unlike IT and ITES sectors.

6.5 Conclusion

The Indian social and cultural milieu influences the personal and work life of its citizens. Women in India, being nurtured in the patriarchal ideology, are socialized with certain stereotypes about gender roles which do not hold the same in the current globalization era. It is high time that women should wake up to the changing demands of the family and work place and socialize their children accordingly.

The variables of the study i.e, organizational role stress, quality of work life and job satisfaction have heightened significance considering the role of women work force in the economic prosperity of the country. The key findings of the study that women in India experience organizational role stress, across sectors and the inverse relationship between organizational role stress with job satisfaction and quality of work life, can be used in framing the policy for organizations in enhancing organizational productivity and employee commitment. It is of relevance for social workers and other professionals involved with mental health, considering the marital break downs, adultery, suicides and psychiatric problems, to help these executives
with stress coping skills. The study reminds us about our duty as social workers in enabling individual employees as well as organizations to lead a better quality of life.

Without work all life goes rotten,

But when work is soulless, life stifles and dies

- Albert Camus

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