Women, Work, And Coping:
Approach To Workplace Stressin Star Category Hotels At Delhi.

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Abstract

A high stress of managers within the hotel industry has become one of the major concerns to the researchers and practitioners. The purpose of the study was to determine the kind of relationship that exists between levels of stress and job satisfaction among women workers in star hotels of Delhi on the basis of their managerial and non-managerial status. The responses of 178 women workers from 40-star hotels of Delhi to a structured questionnaire were analyzed. It was hypothesized that any significant variation will be observed among the responses of women workers in star hotels at Delhi on the basis of their managerial/non-managerial status regarding stress and job satisfaction. Chi-square test did not support the hypotheses. Results showed that women managers face domestic stress predominantly and hence the upward mobility of their career is put on hold. Further research is directed towards evolving stress management techniques for married women workers especially for those having parental/managerial status or both.


Introduction

The increasing awareness of employees’ stress in the hotel industry has become a global phenomenon across the world. In a similar fashion, despite the tremendous development of hotels in India, the problem of stress among employees is a prevailing one and remains high in the industry. The many challenges in the work environments, characterized by heightened competition, lack of time, more uncontrollable factors, lack of space, continuous technological development, conflicting demands from organizational stakeholders (Hall & Savery, 1986), increased use of participatory management and computerization (Murray & Forbes, 1986), greater uncertainty, and others have resulted in higher job stress. In the pursuit of organizational excellence, managers need to work under highly stressful circumstances. Managers in the hotel industry have been found to be experiencing high stress (Jestin & Gampel, 2002).

The Managerial Stress has been defined as the experience achieved by top-level officers of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression resulting from some aspect of their work as Managers. Limited research has been conducted with respect to Managerial stress prevalent among hospitality professionals and industry.

A paradox of work life is that a situation can be seen by one person as a devastating threat, but by another as an invigorating challenge”, says Daniel Goleman. Job-related stress among managers has been described as reaching epidemic. Stressful life is very common in our modern era, particularly in metropolitan cities. Stress in the workplace has, in fact, become the black plague of the twenty-first century.

There is converging evidence that most managers’ reports feelings job-related stress. Recently there has been increasing recognition of the potential positive outcomes associated with job-related stress. Some managers perceive stress as leading to positive outcomes. It is important to note that not all stress is bad, stress can result in a competitive edge and force, positive changes. Job-related stress associated with both positive and negative work outcomes. Stress associated with two kinds of stress-producing job demands or work circumstances described as challenges and hindrances.
The survey for the study revealed that women form a major chunk (40% - 45%) of star hotels’ workforce at Delhi. But practically negligible literature is available on women working in the hotel industry. It was also noticeable during the survey that women are largely visible at non-managerial positions as opposed to managerial positions in star hotels at Delhi. Women workers are mostly visible in guest relations’ and human resource departments. Managerial positions are mostly occupied by them in the housekeeping department, essentially considered to be a female forte and occasionally in guest relations and human resource department. This brings out the fact to light as stated by (Taj, 2010) that Indian males in the workplace continue to recycle the stereotype images of women. The thought provoked by (Hamid, 2007) cannot be overlooked “it is imperative that women are looked upon as individuals in gainful employment and their presence, aspirations and problems need to be noticed”. The need for such an act is glorified by (Taj, 2010) that utilization of women’s talent will enhance the repute of India.

Evidence from the organizational stress literature suggests there are five major categories of sources of job stress for women (J. C. Thomas & Herson, 2002). First, there is stress associated with the job itself, including work overload, the hours of working, decision-making latitude, and the physical work environment. Second, role-based stress includes role conflict, role ambiguity, and job responsibility. Third, there is stress associated with the changing nature of interpersonal relationships, including those with managers, supervisors, subordinates, and co-workers. Fourth, career stress refers to the lack of opportunity for career development and promotion, as well as job insecurity. Finally, there are stressors associated with the work-family interface, including conflicts of loyalty, spillover of demands from one domain to the other, and life events.

Within the hospitality industry, work stress has been regarded as one of the most important issues because, among other things, it reduces job satisfaction and affects the performance of all levels of employees, including both managers and other employees (Ross, G.F., 1995). Recent research has found that employee stress in the hospitality industry is important because it can result in workers becoming exhausted and cynical (Kim, H.J., 2008) which can have negative effect on service delivery. Stress within the hospitality industry has been qualitatively and moderately correlated with employee physiological symptoms, including headaches, fatigue, indigestion, ulcers, blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes (Krone et al., 1989), and thus may result in decreased productivity and increased health care costs for the hospitality employer.

Extant research has found significant positive correlations between people being overcommitted at work and experiencing stress and related problems (Siegrist and Theorell, 2006). Specifically, research has shown there to be a higher negative correlation between stress and job satisfaction among managers than non-managers (Gilboa et al., 2008). The most recent studies on the predictors of stress within the hotel industry were conducted in the western world (Carbery et al., 2003; Hinkin & Tracy, 2000; Lam et al., 2001), and the findings may not be applicable to the local organizations owing to vast economics, social, and cultural environments differences (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986). Further, there have been being limited to such studies have been conducted in the Indian hotel industry which focused on the operational and the managerial employees respectively.

Although a great deal of research has addressed the issues of stress among employee, there still remain gaps in the examination of the predictors of stress among managerial employees as most literature has highlighted a bias towards studying the non-managerial populations (Carbery et al., 2003). In addition, Prior research regarding stress in the hospitality industry has not empirically analyzed differences in stress among women managers and non-managers. The study aims to identify the dominant stressors that influence Delhi star hotels’ female manager’s job satisfaction. Therefore, this study was conducted in order to establish some ways and means that result in reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction of women managers in star hotels at Delhi. For this purpose, the following hypotheses were formulated:
H₀₁: There will be no significant variation among the responses of women workers in star hotels at Delhi on the basis of their managerial/non-managerial status regarding stress and job satisfaction.

H₂: significant variation will be observed among the responses of women workers in star hotels at Delhi on the basis of their managerial/non-managerial status regarding stress and job satisfaction.

Method

The present study is based on primary and secondary sources both. Secondary data have been collected from relevant articles and write-ups appearing in leading business dailies of India. Journals and periodicals have been thoroughly scanned to collect relevant literature in the Indian scenario. Various informative websites, souvenirs and conference proceedings on the subject of stress management, women’s studies and human resources in the Indian backdrop added substance to this work. Primary data, collected through personal observation, discussions, and interviews with different categories of women workers in star hotels of Delhi gave new dimensions to the study. The study is further based on the structured questionnaire served to different categories of women workers in star hotels at Delhi. Forty hotels under study were located mainly in the airport and city area and few in suburban Delhi. The data presented here are from 178 women working in star hotels at Delhi who responded to the questionnaire specially designed to investigate the dominant kind of stress that affects their level of job satisfaction. Though it was extremely challenging to get responses from a large sample of so many hotels personal contacts with different managers of various hotels and continuous liaison with the hospitality industry personnel by the researcher proved fruitful. The questionnaires were distributed to women workers through their departmental heads and they were asked to return the filled questionnaires in the same manner. Out of 208 questionnaires distributed, surprisingly 184 were returned. 6 were rejected on the basis of inadequate information. In order to monitor the variation among responses of different categories’ respondents, the chi-square test was used according to requirement and suitability. For the purpose of this study, women workers in star hotels of Delhi were categorized as follows:

A: women workers with non-managerial status
B: women workers with managerial status

Results

Based on our analysis of the questionnaire and qualitative interviews, role-based stress and stressors associated with the work-family interfaces as the top work characteristics that hotel managers perceived as the most prevalent stressors.

Column 1 of Cumulative Table presents responses of both categories’ respondents working in star hotels at Delhi regarding domestic occupations hindering good performance at the hotel. The calculated value of chi-square is greater than table value. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Column 2 of the cumulative table provides information regarding the conflict between workplace rules & procedures and domestic commitments. In the table, chi-square tests reveal that calculated value of chi-square is greater than table value. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Responses of both categories’ respondents are given in column 3 of cumulative table regarding domestic responsibilities and job challenges in star hotels at Delhi. The table shows that calculated value of chi-square is greater than table value. There are significant variations among the responses from both categories. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.
Responses of both categories of respondents regarding the requirement for more support at home for being more efficient at work are given in column 4 of the cumulative table. It is evident from the table that calculated value is greater than table value. Variations in responses of the respondents are noticeable. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Column 5 of the cumulative table provides responses of the respondents under review with regard to extreme stress symptom of the feeling of being caught in a vicious circle. In the table, chi-square tests make it evident that calculated value of chi-square is greater than table value. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Statistical information regarding overload of home and hotel responsibilities is provided in column 6 of the cumulative table. The result of chi-square tests given in the table shows that calculated value of chi-square is greater than table value. Variances in the responses of both categories’ respondents under reference are significant. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Column 7 of the cumulative table gives an account of responses of respondents under study regarding acute stress symptoms (restlessness & insomnia). Chi-square results as presented in the table make it noticeable that calculated value of chi-square is greater than table value. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Responses of both categories’ of respondents under study pertaining to the negative feeling of lack of maximum input at work are enlisted in column 8 of the cumulative table. Chi-square results given in the table show that calculated value of chi-square is greater than table value. There are significant variances among the responses of different categories’ respondents under review. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Column 9 of the cumulative table gives an account of responses of respondents pertaining to the low sense of achievement/low self-esteem indicating a low level of job satisfaction. Chi-square statistics given in the table show that calculated value of chi-square is greater than table value. Variances in the responses of different categories’ respondents are significant. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Column 10 of the cumulative table presents statistical information regarding women workers’ feeling to work harder to get adequate recognition. The results of chi-square tests in the table indicate that calculated value of chi-square is greater than table value. Variation among the responses of different respondents is significant. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus both hypotheses are accepted at 5% level of significance.

Results of the study confirm that there are five major categories of sources of job stress. First, there is stress associated with the job itself, including work overload, the hours of working, decision-making latitude, and the physical work environment. Second, role-based stress includes role conflict, role ambiguity, and job responsibility. Third, there is stress associated with the changing nature of interpersonal relationships, including those with managers, supervisors, subordinates, and co-workers. Fourth, career stress refers to the lack of opportunity for career development and promotion, as well as job insecurity. Finally, there are stressors associated with the work-family interface, including conflicts of loyalty, spillover of demands from one domain to the other, and life events.

Conclusions

Column 1 of the cumulative table indicates significant variations among the responses, further indicating that different categories of respondents experience different degrees of stress and job satisfaction both. Column 2 of the cumulative table indicates confronting domestic and professional responsibilities of women workers with managerial status whereas women workers with non-managerial status face a lesser conflict between hotel rules, procedures, and domestic commitments. From Column 3 of the cumulative table, it can be inferred that level of stress and degree of job satisfaction is dependent on managerial/ non-managerial responsibilities of women workers. From Column 4 of the cumulative table, it may be deduced that women workers with managerial status are
more prone to domestic stress affecting hotel responsibility than women workers with non-managerial status.

It is further discernible that more than 50% category ‘A’ respondents are of the opinion that their efficiency at hotel may be enhanced if they can secure domestic support. From Column 5 of the cumulative table, it can be inferred that degree of stress symptoms is dependent on the managerial/non-managerial status of women workers and their responsibilities. From Column 6 of the cumulative table, it is indicative that, predominantly, domestic responsibilities affect domestic and work-related stress both which may result in low level of job satisfaction.

Column 7 of the cumulative table shows variance in responses with regard to stress symptoms which are affected by domestic and managerial responsibilities of women workers. Column 8 of the cumulative table indicates that job satisfaction and self-esteem are dependent on domestic and workplace stress. From Column 9 of the cumulative table, it can be concluded that managerial and domestic responsibilities both, are responsible for low self-esteem, low sense of achievement and low level of job satisfaction. From Column 10 of the cumulative table, the conclusion may be drawn that the stress of domestic responsibilities may lead towards work/life conflict, low self-esteem and low level of job satisfaction mainly among women managers in star hotels at Delhi. From the above discussion, it may be deduced that managerial status of women workers in star hotels at Delhi have a significant effect on the level of stress and job satisfaction experienced by them. A literature review has made it clear that success in the hotel industry demands time and undivided attention. Results of the study confirm the difficulty in coping for all categories of married women, especially for married women managers, having children. It is, in fact, a battleground for them to compete for recognition and promotions amidst significant family responsibilities.

**Future Research**

Literature regarding working women in the Indian scenario supports that women still face gender-bias and continue to do the softer jobs. This is evident in the results of the study. Secondly, they have to struggle hard to prove their worth at home and workplace is substantiated by the result of the study that all women workers with managerial status have reported overload of responsibilities owing to their status as working women. The success of a woman is mapped by the way she keeps her house and not the housekeeping she does at the hotel. Further research needs to be done to evolve effective stress management techniques for married women workers in star hotels at Delhi and especially for those who have parental/managerial status or both.

**Suggestions**

The results of the study have clearly indicated that women managers in star hotels at Delhi report greater feelings of stress and lower level of job satisfaction than the other women workers. Therefore, following ideas should be given attention by married women managers, especially those having children:

Since almost all married women managers having children feel overburdened with massive responsibilities, the tool that can rescue them is delegation at the workplace and at home both. (Carnegie, as cited in Radhika, 2010, P. 2) “The secret of success is not in doing your own work, but in recognizing the right man to do it”. Honing of personal and professional skills may make them a perfect fit for the role of a homemaker and career-woman both. (Chanania, 2010) reported that today’s readily changing world requires agile employees who can quickly confront change and thrive despite the heady competition. (Buhler, as cited in Chanania, 2010) emphasis upon flexibility, agility, and responsiveness as the critical skills to be successful in the dynamic environment. Married women workers are strongly advised to develop agility in their attitude. They have to realize that there are no set ways of doing things at home and at the hotel. There can always be new ways of delivering workplace, domestic and parental responsibilities. Married women managers have to innovate constantly, learn self-discipline, learn creative problem-solving techniques and develop flexible attributes. As informed in (www.timesascent.in, 2009), the factor to be counted is the way one delivers commitments and how one is able to make a difference. A contented personal and professional life is
not a utopian concept. The problem with women managers generally is not with the dream to actually create a perfectly balanced personal and professional world but with making that dream an obsession. Married women managers need to understand and identify the realms of possibility and that which may be an impossibility to achieve. (Nangia, 2010) states that there are phases when one needs to give one’s all to work and when one needs to step back with equal confidence and give due importance to one’s personal life. (Mill, as cited in Nangia, 2010) feels that, it is possible to be content with life even though ‘dissatisfied’ so long one has the proper balance of pleasure, quantitatively and qualitatively. So married women managers need to learn how to manage personal and professional roles simultaneously without being excessively stressed. They need to ‘adapt’ themselves as per the situation.

Attaining success at work and life both is all about balance. Efficiency is the key to success at work and in life both. In a guest-focused environment in hotels, one has to be result oriented and this requires women managers to work smart. This is the age of working smarter rather than working harder. (Gupta, as cited in Nair & Taj, 2009) states that being smart is all about working in collaboration, remaining focused, encouraging seamless sharing of information and benefiting from the abounding creativity and knowledge available.

Working smart at hotel and home is important as it accelerates the accomplishment of goals set forth on both the fronts. Women managers have to use the power of knowledge, leverage their key learning and innovate to win the tasks at hotel and home both. With an array of negative emotions (low self-esteem, feeling of lack of maximum input at work, and feeling of being caught in a vicious circle), women managers experience due to professional and personal life demands, the need to address this issue becomes imperative as negative emotions can have a negative impact on job performance and eventually job satisfaction. Emotions are contagious and can travel from one person to another within the workplace or at home. Women managers need to learn to segregate negative emotions at the workplace and negative emotions at home and carve out an ‘emotional management strategy’ for both the fronts. To be in control of such emotions, they need to become master of emotions. Women managers should try to inculcate an open culture at home where they can express their worries regarding hotel and home both. Similarly, at star hotels also, they can try to inculcate a similar culture where they can share their worries and issues on an informal platform amongst peer group or other colleagues. If women managers feel cushioned with the support of family and colleagues then it can bring down their stress level considerably and probably increase their job satisfaction.

Heavy schedules and tighter deadlines at hotel and home both are telling on the health of women managers. They are becoming prone to restlessness and insomnia. The major cause identified in the study of these problems is domestic stress. In the Indian context, as reported by (Raj, 2011) the workforce does not pay attention to techniques to avoid stress and reluctantly seek medical help. Stress levels can be controlled through effective relaxation techniques. In order to build physical and emotional resilience, married women workers need to take charge of their emotions and time both. They have to become conscious of their state of mind and spend time on activities that can help in beating fatigue. Such activities can be:

• Indulging in physical exercise/yoga/sports which aid good health and positivity of attitude. This can be done either at home or even at the hotel.
• Allotting a relaxation time for them in the daily schedule, and indulging in activities that can provide a sense of joy and happiness. It could be listening to music, reading a book or gardening. Such activities can make the married women worker a well-oiled engine to meet the rough road ahead.
• Humor is said to be a great stress reliever. Sharing jokes, reading funny storybooks or watching comedy shows on television can be a good idea. Even watching cartoon channels with children at home can be an effective way to recharge them. Married women workers have to choose the best stress buster that suits them in order to ease their stress. Achieving work/life balance is difficult but maintaining it is even more difficult. This requires an impeccable ‘time-management strategy’ to be carved out by married women workers. They are advised to:
  • Follow an action plan. When one is better organized, one’s efficiency increases. Making a daily schedule, making a list of activities and prioritizing them should be done on regular basis. Married
women workers are suggested to plan in advance to deal with impending additional responsibilities like an official get-together, a parent-teacher meeting, overtime required at the hotel or helping the children prepare for their annual examinations. It is always good to make the most of time whether at the hotel or at home. Carrying personal problems to work and thinking about work at home is the worst thing to do. Spending quality and fruitful time at hotel and home both are strongly advised to married women workers. Being away from the hotel for a long time is an equally restricted idea of working late every day or every weekend.

- Better time-management can be displayed by securing family support. Married women workers should make their children more responsible and should not hesitate to ask for spousal help in domestic chores. In the Indian context, even today, home is the special or at times the exclusive responsibility of the woman. Married women workers need to influence this mindset and tending the house should become the joint duty of both the partners. They should learn to make a simple thing like laying out the dinner table, an enjoyable and continued family affair. Married women workers should suggest the Human Resources (HR) department of their hotel to have:
  - Employee Counseling Cell/Employee Assistance Programs with a woman counselor on board for assistance in sorting out work/life conflicts amongst women employees. If women workers get a chance to voice their personal/professional concerns in a confidential manner then they can feel relaxed. Also, they can get sound advises from a counselor that can help them sort out their day to day issues. Married women workers are recommended to try and secure top management commitment and support for such programs.

(Raj, 2011) emphasizes that the use of stress busters can keep one stress-free to a great extent and goes on to elaborate that a better response to life situations and at work can come out of people even under pressure when they know that they can fight out their stress levels. The same is strongly recommended to women managers in star hotels at Delhi.

Limitations

The data presented in this study is based on responses received from women managers in specific departments of star hotels. Hence it is quite possible that similar nature of work among the respondents evoked similar responses. Also, the lifestyle of people at Delhi being quite similar owing to its metropolitan status makes it possible again those same kinds of stressors are acting upon women workforce. Hence again there is asimilarity in responses.

Summary

The results of the study point towards the gender-specific problems and needs of married women managers in star hotels at Delhi that can be instrumental in reducing their level of stress level and increasing their level of job satisfaction. Work/life balance is the biggest challenge and married women managers have to create their own path. (Taj, 2010) reports regarding Indian women that major roadblocks for women who aspire to achieve and succeed in organizations are the presence of social and role constraints imposed upon them by society, family and women themselves. Though a few challenges still remain, women managers in India, in general, are bogged down by the dual role-play and star hotels of Delhi are no exception.

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Source: Compiled and computed from the responses to questionnaire.