Women in IT-ITES Industries: Their Coping Styles and Quality of Work Life

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Abstract

Women have chosen to establish their names in the competitive globe along with being good home-makers. Information Technology-Information Technology Enabled Services (IT-ITES) industries have helped women to establish their names in the competitive globe along with being good home-makers. With increasing responsibilities, women have been subjected to increasing stress. Women tend to use different coping styles to protect themselves against stress. Not all coping mechanisms are healthy. Meanwhile attention needs to be paid on the quality of their work life, as it's a very competitive and dynamic industry. This study emphasizes on the different coping styles adopted by the women employees, their quality of work life and the relationship between these two variables. The research design used for the study is descriptive design. The researcher adopted convenient sampling technique to collect data from 307 women employees representing six IT-ITES companies in Bangalore city. The study revealed that the 'distractive positive' method of coping style was the most widely used by the women employees. The 'quality of work life' of these women employees was on the higher side. The results also showed that there is a significant relationship between coping style and quality of work life.

Keywords: Coping Styles, Quality of Work Life, IT-ITES Industries

1. Introduction

Born between 1980–1995, the female millennial is more ambitious than her predecessors. Women have chosen to establish their names in the competitive globe along with being good home-makers. IT as well as ITES industries has helped in pursuing this objective to a greater extent enabling employment in return of good salary. Well qualified women opt for various companies considering that the policies of the company do not affect their other commitment. It is no longer a whim or a topic of criticism that women are earning their own living. Educated women are no longer confined at the time, although it is their choice to work or not to work. In IT-ITES industries, most women have acquired posts both in middle level as well as in the top level. Work as well as education is no longer an adjustment, a matter of shame or any phenomenon that has to be kept hidden from others. It has rather become a part of the lives of women. Women working in IT-ITES industries have to function within the prescribed deadlines and have to bring in work with the best quality which in turn is a factor of stress.

The first effect of stress is on the body of women. The occurrence of abnormal periods, mood swings, early greying of hair and other relative factors are easily observable. The way women respond to stress is much more different from the way men do. Literature also suggests that men and women are subjected to different kinds of stressors and therefore they respond differently. Males are more prone to develop fatal health problems at a younger age, on the other hand women are more

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prone to non-fatal, but long term and disabling, health problems. Thus there are gender-based differences in response to stress but it would be more interesting to look into individual differences within women and men while responding to stress (Debra & James, 2010).

1.1 Stress Coping Styles

Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioural adaptations of an individual to counter specific external and/or internal demands which are perceived to exceed the personal resources of the individual (Lazarus & Folkman,1984). Coping is a contextual and effortful process, which changes based on an evaluation of how successful the current coping is. The emphasis is on the ability to manage the situation rather than gaining mastery over it.

Folkman & Lazarus (1991) examined two basic dimensions of coping - vigilant, confrontative active coping (problem-focused) and another avoidant, emotional or palliative coping (emotion focused). Brandtstädter (1992) categorizes these strategies as assimilative (modifying the environment) and accommodative (modifying oneself) which could also be perceived as mastery versus meaning (Taylor, 1983), or primary versus secondary control (Rothbaum et al., 1982). Individuals often change their coping strategies over time. Problem-focused coping refers to efforts made towards resolving the problem at hand and includes several strategies such as seeking information by talking to a friend, spouse, acquiring the necessary skills, making alternate plans or taking specific action or negotiating (Moos & Billings, 1982). Emotion-focused coping refers to attempts directed at emotions that accompany stress. Emotion-focused coping includes behaviours such as avoidance, minimization, distancing, and selective attention (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Based on psychological theories and illustrated review there are many coping mechanisms like task-oriented (problem-focused), emotion-oriented, and avoidant strategies. Time for self, managing their thoughts, religion and social support. It is evident that the human mind needs a strong support system to handle stressful situations. By this it is understood that coping with stress with appropriate strategies will help in increasing the quality of general health and also quality of work life.

1.2 Quality of Work Life

Quality of Work Life (QWL) refers to the favourableness or unfavourableness of a total job environment for people. QWL programmes focus to make jobs more fulfilling, growth and learning oriented (system of recognition and rewards, security, satisfaction, advancement, open communication) and conditions of work for accommodative, flexible, participative to elicit excellence from people and to also sustain the economic health of the organization.

QWL is a goal and a process in itself which requires noble intentions and pro-active participation so that satisfaction, growth, accomplishment could be achieved at all levels of the organization. QWL as a philosophy views people as 'assets' to be nurtured who come with knowledge, skills, experience and commitment not as 'costs' to be controlled.

QWL is not based on a specific theory and does not propagate a particular technique. It is a dynamic process looking at holistic development. One analysis of QWL described it as, (1) the deep study of the impact of work on the workforce and on organizational effectiveness, and (2) the inclusiveness of the work environment which is reflected in its openness to participation, to meet challenges and make decisions. Therefore, the underlying purpose is to bring about a human-technological-organizational interface which in turn leads to the achievement of individual and organizational goals. The more holistic an organization's perspective of development, the higher the perception of the quality of life among employees (Anbarasan & Mehta, 2009).

A study by Bhende et al. (2020), looked into the aspects of Quality of work life and work-life balance and explored the influence of Quality of work-life on work-life balance. Data was obtained from 89 public and private sector bank managers in India. According to Bhende et al. (2020), "all aspects of Quality of

work-life except grievance resolution have affected the productivity dimension of work-life balance. In addition, all three dimensions of work life efficiency were predicted by the capability deployment dimension. None of the dimensions of Quality of work life, however, had any relationship with the productivity dimension of work-life balance. By improving the quality of work life, the study would allow managers to ensure employee efficiency and skill deployment".

2. Statement of the Problem

The field of information technology has created a constant and rapidly growing job pool for skilled IT employees. This industry is the pursuit of the privileged, youthful, educated, urban and upper and middle class family background women who represent most of their workforce.

This industry has taken a lead in adopting best practices in HR to attract women employees and emerge as a preferred career destination for these professionals. However, the field of IT is experiencing a considerable shortage of women. Hence, the organizations have to create cutting edge, creative opportunities to attract, recruit, retain, and promote women in this sector (NASSCOM- Mencher, 2009).

In response to this problem, this study proposes to investigate the challenges faced by women employees who hinder them to consider to work and develop in this sector and thus suggesting programmes and policies to the IT & ITES organizations to have a good talent pool of women employees.

3. Profile of the Study Area, Study Units and Respondents

The data was collected from women employees of six IT and ITES industries in Bangalore. The total population of these six industries was 614. The researcher used convenient sampling technique, which is a non-probability sampling method, to collect the primary

data. Data was collected from 322 respondents, out of which only 307 were complete.

4. Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to analyse the coping styles and quality of work life of working women in the light of gender inclusivity. The objectives were to study the socio-demographic profiles of the respondents, to analyse the coping styles adopted by the respondents, to assess the quality of work life of the respondents and to find out the relationship between the two study parameters.

5. Research Methodology

The research design used for the study is descriptive design. The total population of the six companies that agreed to participate was 614. The researcher used convenient sampling technique, which is a non-probability sampling method, to collect the primary data. The total number of respondents considered for this study was 307.

Tools for Data Collection: Coping Checklist (CCL) developed by Rao, et al. (1989) was used to assess the coping styles adopted by women employees. The Work-Related Quality of Life (WRQoL) scale developed by Simon Easton & Darren Van Laarin in 2012 was used to measure the Quality of work life of women employees.

6. Review of Literature

According to Rao, et al. (2003), "when examined the role of work-related factors, availability of support and coping styles as predictors of wellbeing, working women with multiple responsibilities and role, enhancing problem and emotion-focused coping & by strengthening the use of the support network is important for their wellbeing".

The Coping Check List (CCL) has generated considerable research covering several populations.

Among executives, a personality constellation characterized by a high control, commitment and challenge was associated with greater problem-focused coping and higher well-being, while avoidance coping and distraction were correlated with greater psychological distress and lower well-being (Ahuja et al.,1998). A study on married working women indicated that coping behaviours are stable over stressful episodes and type of stressor as well as the domain in which it occurred and the perceived control over it influenced the coping behaviour used (Murthy, 2007). Studies on coping behaviours in clinical samples indicate the use of denial and escape more frequently in patients with depression. Normal also report greater use of problem-focused coping than clinical samples (Sharma, 2007). Rammohan et al., (2002) report that caregivers of patients with schizophrenia used religious coping in the initial stages and denial and strength of religious beliefs contributed to psychological well-being.

According to Sumangala et al., (2009), "software employees of different managerial levels differ significantly on subscales of coping- healthy cognitive mechanisms, physical activity-related coping and unproductive coping mechanisms, where lower level IT professionals were found to possess higher scores. In unproductive coping mechanisms, middle level IT professionals were found to possess the least scores and lower level IT employees possessed the highest".

According to Shueh-Yi Lian & Cai Lian Tam (2014), "There is a lot to learn about how working females meet and adapt to stressful work situations in Malaysian women. This research is an attempt to recognise the building factors of resilience in the capacity of enhancing effective coping strategies in order to help the working females to thrive and sustain satisfying careers in their work environment. Therefore, programmes that emphasis on teaching resilience, that understands and effectively handling with the stressful situation, has more chances to decrease the risk of developing negative health effects for this population. Based on the literature, most stress and coping studies were revolving around working mothers, working single mothers and non-working mothers. Even though it can be assumed but the working mothers experience a high level of work stress".

The study by Fteiha & Awwad (2020) explored the relationship of emotional intelligence in university students and the style of dealing with psychological stress. The study stressed that stress management styles are significant adaptive skills that should be an integral part of students' personality at all levels. It has primarily concentrated on the changes in the academic and social climate of the students. The study also proposed that university professors should be well informed of the idea of emotional intelligence, types of stress coping, and its dimensions and meaning, so that they can provide students with detailed guidance on how to cope with stress.

According to Van Boatel et al. (2019), "coping strategies that demonstrate the need for space and time to deal with stressors, fair working hours and salaries and right to a day off were identified and religion was an important coping resource as a way to retain a sense of connection with one's community".

According to Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy (2013), "the multidimensional concept of quality of work life to draw interest and retain human talent is important and also QWL in the literature has been discovered in direct connection with organizational performance and effectiveness".

According to Jaiswal (2014), "Quality of work life (QWL) is an indicator of the overall quality of the human experience at the workplace". A commitment to quality of work life by the management of an organization can be considered a keystone of organizational behaviour. The main goal of Quality of work life is to create such a workplace that boosts employee well-being and satisfaction. The general objective of quality of work life program is to content the full range of employee needs. The quality of work life program will certainly be improved to the desired levels if the organization properly adopts the techniques of job redesign, career development, flexible work schedules and job security".

Research on the quality of work of female employees working in Saudi Arabia's private sector has shown that the dominant factors for explaining QWL to

female employees are job satisfaction, availability of development opportunities, and organizational culture. According to Shani (2017), "there is an urgent need to advance the work-life balance by having more flexible work arrangements at the workplace, as work-life balance was shown as a significant predictor of good quality of work life".

A study by Ramya (2017) focused on exploring the impact of stress on the quality of work life among women employees. The findings revealed that there is a significant impact of stress on QWL of women employees irrespective of their age. This study recommends that the organizations must provide their employees, a stress-free work environment which leads to good QWL.

According to Ashrafi et al., (2018), "Gender and professional variables such as job interest, employment period, and shift work did not have any significant correlation with burnout. This model has three variables that were observed and recorded to understand burnout levels. These variables are personal accomplishment, intensity of emotional exhaustion, and intensity of depersonalization. The latent variable burnout was created by these 3 factors. The other exogenous variable was the QWL of the individual. This variable (QWL) has been regarded as a burnout predictor. In the final model, a SEM regression model evaluated the relationship between burnout as a latent variable and QWL as a predictor. An adverse and substantial connection between QWL and burnout was noted in this model and therefore burnout decreased with a rise in QWL".

7. Analysis and Interpretation

7.1 Socio-demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Among 307 participants, 55.4% of them belong to the age range of 23-27 years and 26.4% of them belong to the age range of 28-32 years. The mean score of the age of the respondents is 27.21 years. Further, 60.3 % of them have done their Under Graduate education (BE

and B Tech) and 33.5% of them have done their Post-Graduation education (M Tech) in engineering. More than half (54.4%) of the participants are unmarried and remaining 45.6% participants are married. Among 307 participants, 63.84% of them are at entry level designations and remaining participants are at mid-level positions. When it comes to years of work experience, 48.85% of the participants have 1-4 years of experience and next highest is women with 5-8 years of experience (31.60%). 12.70% of the participants have 9-12 years of experience, 3.25% of the participants have 13-16 years of experience and only 1.30% of the participants have more than 16 years of work experience.

7.2 Coping Styles Adopted by the Respondents

The results presented in (Table 1), show that among the different types of predominant coping styles, the Distractive positive method of coping style is the most widely used by the women employees (7.9 ± 2.80). This involves distracting oneself from a stressor by thinking about or engaging in activities that induce positive emotion. The Acceptance method of coping style is the second most widely used style by the women employees (7.3 ± 2.19). Here, the respondents accept the situation and look on the bright side of the things. This is followed by problem solving style (6.4 ± 2.05) which is more practical and ideal of all styles of coping. Because in this style, the respondents try to work out solutions to the problem by analysing and understanding the problem. Denial/blame is the fourth largest style used by them (5.3 ± 2.28) which is considered as not so ideal style of coping. Here the respondent either deny the reality or blame her luck.

Table 1. Coping styles adopted by the respondents

	Coping styles	Mean	SD	Rankings
1.	Distractive positive	7.9	± 2.80	1
2.	Acceptance	7.3	± 2.19	2
3.	Problem solving	6.4	±2.05	3
4.	Denial/blame	5.3	±2.28	4
5.	Religion/faith	4.02	±2.05	5
6.	Social support	3.8	±1.30	6
7.	Distractive negative	2.6	±1.81	7

Religion/faith is the fifth largest style used by them (4.02 ± 2.05). This involves visiting places of worship, astrologer, wearing lucky charm etc. Among the seven different predominant types of coping styles, Social support is preferred as sixth best (3.8 ± 1.30) which includes seeking support from family or friends. Distractive Negative method of coping style is used least by the women employees (2.6 ± 1.81). This involves depending on substance, over eating/sleeping, seeking sexual comfort etc.

7.3 Quality of Work Life of the Respondents

The results presented in Table 2, reveal that the overall quality of work life of the women employees is on the higher side (80.7 ± 10.55). Higher percentiles indicate a better Quality of Working Life (QWL). Here the Quality of Work Life is determined through various dimensions.

7.4 Coping Styles and Demography

7.4.1 Age

There is a significant mean rank difference between age categories on Social Support coping style (K= 16.744, p = 0.002), which reveals that employees belonging to the 23-27 age category are having higher Social support coping styles as compared to other age categories. Similarly, there is a significant mean rank difference between age categories on Problem solving coping style (K= 22.518, p= .000), which reveals that employees belonging to the 18-22 age category

Table 2. Quality of Work Life of the respondents

	Dimensions	Mean	SD
1.	Control at work	9.6678	2.05966
2.	General well being	20.5147	3.46537
3.	Home-work Interface	11.0163	2.21324
4.	Job Career Satisfaction	22.2443	3.77932
5.	Stress at work	5.9316	1.63655
6.	Working conditions	11.3713	1.90430
7.	Overall QWL	3.6515	.84735
	Overall Total	80.7459	10.55954

are having higher Problem solving coping styles as compared to other age categories. Further, it is found that there is a significant mean rank difference between age categories on Distractive positive coping style (K=16.376, p=.003), which reveals that employees belonging to the 18-22 age category are having higher Distractive positive coping styles as compared to other age categories. Similarly, there is a significant mean rank difference between age categories on Distractive negative coping style (K=9.682, p=.046), which reveals that employees belonging to the above 37 age category are having higher Distractive negative coping styles as compared to other age categories. Further, it is found that there is a significant mean rank difference between age categories on Acceptance/Redefinition coping style (K=26.925, p=.000), which reveals that employees belonging to the 18-22 age category are having higher Acceptance/Redefinition coping styles as compared to other age categories.

7.4.2 Marital Status

Under Problem solving coping style, there is a significant mean rank difference between married and unmarried employees (Mann U= 8589.0, p< 0.001) which means that unmarried employees are having higher Problem solving coping style in comparison to married employees. Under Distractive positive coping style, there is a significant mean rank difference between married and unmarried employees (Mann U= 8478.5, p< 0.001), which means that unmarried employees are having higher Distractive positive coping style in comparison to married employees. Under Acceptance/ Redefinition coping style, there is a significant mean rank difference between married and unmarried employees (Mann U= 8255.5, p< 0.001), which means that unmarried employees are having higher Acceptance/ Redefinition coping style in comparison to married employees. Under Social support coping style, there is a significant mean rank difference between married and unmarried employees (Mann U= 10073.0, p< 0.05), which means that unmarried employees are having higher Social support coping style in comparison to married employees.

7.4.3 Years of Work Experience

The result reveals that there is a significant relationship between years of work experience and coping styles. There is a negative relationship between Problem solving coping style and years of work experience (Rho= -0.290, p < 0.001) similarly there is a negative relationship between Distractive positive coping style and years of work experience (Rho= -0.274, p < 0.001). A positive relationship between Distractive negative coping style and years of work experience (Rho= 0.143, p < 0.05); Denial/Blame coping style and years of work experience (Rho= 0.124, p < 0.05) was found. A negative relationship between Social support coping style and years of work experience (Rho= -0.178, p < 0.01); Acceptance/ Redefinition coping style and years of work experience (Rho= -0.201, p < 0.001) was found.

7.4.4 Education Qualification

There is no statistically significant difference between education qualifications and coping styles.

7.5 Quality of Work Life and Demography

There is no statistically significant difference between age categories and Quality of work life; marital status and Quality of work life; years of work experience and Quality of work life; education qualification and Quality of work life.

Relationship between coping styles and quality of work life.

The results presented in Table 3, show that there is a significant relationship between coping style and quality of work life. It showed that coping styles such

Table 3. Relationship between coping styles and quality of work life

Quality of Work Life		Coping styles						
		PS	DP	DN	AR	RF	DB	SS
	Rho	0.135*	0.096	-0.122*	0.028	0.206**	-0.065	0.150**
	P	<0.01	0.092	<0.05	0.626	<0.001	0.256	<0.05

PS - Problem solving; DP – Distraction positive; DN - Distractive negative; A – Acceptance; RF - Religion/faith; DB - Denial/blame; SS - Social support

as problem solving, religion faith and social support have positive relationship with QWL. There exists a negative relationship between distractive negative coping style and QWL. However, there is no significant relationship between quality of work life and other coping styles. This reveals that, Quality of Work Life and better coping styles are related positively; whereas, negative coping style brings down the Quality of Work Life.

A study by Mirzaii et al. (2014) examined the relation between the quality of working life and stress coping styles with job satisfaction among school teachers and the results denote that "there is a significant relation between the quality of working life and stress coping styles and teachers' job satisfaction".

According to recommendation made by Ajala (2013), "a proper understanding of the construct of QWL and the dynamic nature will enable human resource practitioners and industrial social workers take proactive steps in integrating relevant strategies, policies, training programs, procedures and coping strategies to improve the quality of work life of employees so as to guarantee their wellbeing".

8. Suggestions

The social goals of an industry can be attained with the help of Social Work. Thus the subject Social Work has a significant role in industries. Industries have realized the importance of social atmosphere and employee wellbeing, rather than only focusing on trade of produce and services. They have also realized that productivity needs to be achieved through employee satisfaction.

Social workers working in Human Resource department of IT & ITES industries can be benefitted by this research in understanding the importance of management support systems for women employees. This study can create real empathy in management towards women employees in terms of understanding the ideal coping styles that they need to adapt. This study also helps in comprehending the dimensions

and importance of quality of work life of women employees, so that relevant enhancement programmes can be developed.

Since most of the respondents are young, educated and at entry level jobs/designations, the management should design work environment to suit these employees. Many women employees are married and therefore more family friendly policies are needed. Women need to be assertive and expressive. A good social support helps women to balance work and family/personal life. The social support can be available through family members, friends, colleagues, relatives etc.

Keeping in mind the results of the study, the researcher has proposed few suggestions to the management for implementation for women employees to practice. This will enable organisations to bring about women friendly environment in their respective workplaces, thus paving the way for economic growth and betterment of the society. And women on the other hand will be able to handle stress with better coping styles and achieve better quality of work life. Social Work researchers can take up comparative studies of women employees who are working in other sectors. Similar studies on women working in night shifts in IT & ITES industries can be taken up. Such studies may encourage social workers to take up more research studies on women employees that encompass women empowerment and development.

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