Coping with Techno-Work-Life Stress:

A Case of the Indian Software Industry

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore,

West Bengal (INDIA)

Dr. Asmita Bhattacharyya

Aim: This paper examines the work-life stress amongst the women software techies in context of new workplace of IT industry of Kolkata (an Indian megapolis city). The uniqueness of this new workplace of IT industry lies in the fact that it demands 24X7 work alertness; elongated working hours, complex shift pattern and normative expectations to perform unpaid overtime. These factors lead to a situation where 'home is work and work is home'.The situation becomes more acute for women when most workplaces are less sensitive to family demands of their workers and at home. Deliverance of this dual role in the proper way is one of the means of building up work-life stress. Thus, the objective of our study is the extents to which new workplace demands affects work-life balance that add to women their stress.

Data & Methods: For this purpose, an extensive survey carried out with the help of interview schedule administered on snow-ball method to 250 software techies across different tiers (entry, middle level & top level managers) of the firms and across different sizes. Those responses are codified for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data. The study attains analysis, both at the theoretical and empirical levels.

Results: We found the following results at both empirical and theoretical levels.

i) The field view, depicts that there exist a significant relation (Chi square value: 22.037; df=2; p<.001) between marital status and gender identity amongst the studied sample.

ii) The *emic* perspectives from the respondents' delineates notional construction of 'techno-workplace stress'. The 'stress construct' is of multidimensional origin with macro–meso and micro inter-linkages operating within the industry.

iii) Resultant effect of techno-workplace stress has spill-over effects on women's dual role. Some of the spill-over effects are behavioral deficiency, mental agony, lack in patience level and risk of apprehension of destabilising the family. The coping strategies are time-budgeting, multi-tasking and outsourcing to the paid services.

iv) The theoretical underpinnings implicate the cross-currents of two opposing ideological forces one that of capitalist interest operating at the IT workplace whereas the other is that of patriarchal ideology compels them to prioritise their family, thus, making them doubly disadvantaged.

Conclusion: From these findings, the 'techno-stress' as the multi-dimensional factor from individual's perspectives and organisational standpoint are deconstructed. Ultimately, it focuses on how this techno-stress has spill-over impact on women's dual role, and subsequently, how they cope with it. Juxtaposition of two strands of capitalist and patriarchal ideologies are responsible for such ordeal of the women techies.

References

Hochschild, Arlie and Anne Machung. 1989. The second shift: Working parents and the revolution at home. New York: Viking Penguin Inc.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1997. The Time bind: When work becomes home and home becomes work. New York: Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt & Co.

Kelkar, Govind and Dev Nathan. 2002. 'Gender relations and technological change in Asia', Current Sociology, 50 (3): 427- 41.

Shanker, D. 2008. 'Gender relations in IT companies: An Indian experience', Gender Technology and Development, 12(2):185- 207.