

# A STUDY ON JOB STRESS AMONG IT EMPLOYEES

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## **ABSTRACT**

Stress refers to a feeling of physical or emotional tension. The source of stress could be any event or thought that makes you nervous frustrated or angry. The main purpose of this study is to determine the possible causes of stress in the job and suggest appropriate interventions to reduce and manage stress among IT employees in Covid pandemic where the workforce executive their job roles through work from home model. There are different factors which contribute to stress in work influencing the employee commitment, job satisfaction, productivity and job involvement. The research sample consists of 64 respondents, consisting of male and female working at all levels in the IT sector. The data was collected through online using structured questionnaire. The sampling technique adapted was convenient sampling. The techniques for analysis used in the study are descriptive statistics and Chi Square Analysis. Deadlines in the project or jobs to be met, lack of appreciation from the supervisors/management, lack of security and safety are found to be the main source of stress among IT employees. Further a few suggestions to intervene the job stress such as psychological counselling, virtual annual family day programmes, virtual informal weekly meetings, access to fitness centres and employee autonomy in decision making were recommended to reduce and manage job stress among IT employees.

**Keywords:** Job stress, Stress management interventions, IT employees, Workload etc...

## **INTRODUCTION**

Stress amongst the employees in the IT sector is seen for quite a long time. With the growth of female representatives in IT area, Job has likewise expanded. Productivity is said as a measure of the efficiency of a person, machine, factory, system etc., in converting inputs into useful outputs. It can be products or administrations and data sources incorporate the work, endeavours, time and abilities. Output is a basic determinant of cost effectiveness. The enterprise that understands the significance of productivity in the workplace has higher chance of success. Productive employees are assets to organization, where maximize

the utilization of human resources capacity happen. It is important to recognise the stress level of its employees, curb it and in return increase their productivity.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Dr. J. Donald Millae MD has published comprehensive study that briefly explained the causes behind work related diseases and injuries in his work: General Adaption Syndrome Model, 1988. A cross sectional survey was performed on 420 US citizens covering various occupational lung diseases, musculoskeletal injuries, etc. which resulted in formulation of preventive strategies based on the data evaluation.

On the similar lines, Baun William B. found out through his work: Selye's General Adaptation Model, the difference between cost expenditure on health care facilities for a fitness person vs normal citizen. The data sample was of random 517 people spread across working population. More analysis showed dependency of selection of particular set of exercise over general exercise was more helpful in saving cost on fitness.

Further, on the expenditure, Johnson's L Bly described Diathesis stress model, how company health policies and promotion resulted in reduced healthcare costs and hospital utilizations. A set of 110 people was survey in USA. Results were documented in terms of number of hospital admission days, healthcare expenses, rate of hospitalisation, etc.

Recently, Amanpreet Kaur Sidhu also analysed the data of around 650 employees for Diathesis stress model. He parameterized certain variables that are responsible for creating tension in employees. Some of them being workload, work environment, focus, future outlook, etc. Frequency of visiting a doctor and number of illnesses significantly can be brought down if we try to improve on these parameters.

Ingrid Altman published Person Environment Fit Model which is basically defining the impact on human behaviour with increasing age and experience in a workplace. Interviews were performed on 180 US citizens covering both young and experienced age groups to observe the delta.

Demand control Model by MJ Colligan, 1977 gives an idea about the rate at which mental health disorders are increasing due to occupational incidences. This research attempted to provide the empirical foundation for occupational health professionals Identifying and picking relevant professions for more relationship analysis Between job stress and the wellbeing of staff.

JE Fielding conceptualised a new model in 1984: Response based model of stress. This study also focuses on company promoting the importance of health and prevention of diseases at worksite. Results show that promoting safe programs are very distinct and have a distinct incentive from the typical Concerns regarding workplace health and mandatory environmental inspection and analysis.

Jannel L. Blazowich, Katherine taken Smith, L Murphy Smith conducted a study on mother-friendly companies, keeping in mind various aspects like their work life balance & emotional well-being. Study was

affected by policies of the organisation which were related to parents. Later on further research recommended the employees to follow the program guidelines strictly with quick action to improve health & increase productivity.

In 2013, Choudhury, Khoushiki conducted a detailed study on managing workplace stress thereby keeping in mind various independent & dependant aspects as in: the mental set required for a particular job & dependence upon personality & mental stress of the employees. Results came up with a problem-solving method which suggested to conduct researches & studies in the area of internal marketing, psychological counselling & workplace stress.

In 2008, James Thomas Kunnanatt conducted a detailed study on emotional intelligence & its competency model for interpersonal effectiveness, resulting to develop a competency-based model of EI based on inputs from academic research & feedback from EI training specialists.

Managing & resolving workplace conflict is, on which a study conducted by David B Lipsky, Ariel C. Avgar, J Ryan Lamare is based, conducted in 2016 through observational research on unaware employee in difficult situations. It offers an integrated analysis of particular types of workplace conflict that are typically treated separately by scholars and practitioners. These include misclassification conflicts, no poaching and labour market competition conflicts, and executive compensation conflicts.

Depression in the workplace let Pamela R. Jhonsan, Julie Advic to conduct a study back in 1997. Interview with a clinical psychologist method was used that came up with the best outcome which concludes that with correct diagnosis & treatment around 80-90 percent of sufferers can be helped.

Psychological well-being of employees in banking was affected by psychological well-being impacting employees & work related stress with staff problems & morale. For which a study was conducted by Houngha, Kavitha Palaniappan, Rita Pidanin in 2019. This study led to collection of 400 valid responses from banking employees in Singapore which led to setting of prevalence rates of depression, anxiety & stress to 38%, 70% & 32% respectively.

Garima Mathur in 2007 published her findings under Job Characteristics Model how stress can affect job performance working under different manufacturing organizations. For this study, around 220 employee's performance was analysed based on their records from past few years.

Emerald in the year 2020 published an article on Stress-detachment model. Recently due to Covid-19, an increase in work from home culture and its impact on mental health was the motivation behind the study. Covid-19 has caused a negative psychological impact on employees. A survey on 1200 was studied for coming to a conclusion.

Cary L. Cooper in 2001 has developed a response-based model of stress which mainly focuses on managerial, occupational and organizational stress research. They used oral histories of 650 USA employees for data collection and analysis. They found that development of empirical and work with other countries in different countries has significant relation with the occupational and organizational stress.

Sumathi Annamalai in 2016 did a research on Effort-Reward Imbalance Model and it is related to the study on occupational stress and job satisfaction. There is an association between occupational stress and health (both mental and physical), also occupational stress with paper-and-pencil survey battery comprising of five scales was completed by 360 participants. Results indicate that there is negative job satisfaction. And it found out the existing significant differences among the dimensions of job satisfaction, relationship dynamics' is reported to be the principal dissatisfying factor.

## **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Evaluating and understanding the reason behind work stress of the IT employees across India and finding interventions to provide appropriate support to reduce them.

## **RESEARCH GAP**

Based upon the review of research papers in the chosen field of stress management and reduction, it is noted that employees are given adequate importance when it comes to workplace stress management. Various steps are taken for the employees to cope up well in the organisation. However, practicality and working of these steps are still in doubt. The source of stress is not only limited to the tensions in job. There could be various other sources like, family problems, financial issues, medical problem and more.

It may be seen as secondary to the organisation. But, employees spend most of their time in the organisation, sometimes even more than they spend with their families. The hustle is important to understand so that interventions could be identified.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The purpose for this paper is to identify the possible sources of stress that an individual might face in the workplace and come up with appropriate interventions that organisations should adopt to reduce stress.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What is your understanding of the nature of stress, sources of stress among IT employees and what possible interventions could be adopted to reduce this?

## METHODOLOGY

### Data collection method

The study is descriptive in nature. Primary data was collected through survey method for which we constructed a questionnaire using Google Forms. Secondary data was collected using previously published research, articles and journals and industry reports.

### Sample Size Determination

The Convenient Sampling technique was used to collect data for our research. The sample unit consisted of IT professionals working in the IT industry across India and the size of our sample is 64.

### Measuring Instrument

A combination of structured and unstructured questions were used to collect data for our study.

### Sample Geographic Area

The respondents are IT professionals residing all over India.

## DATA ANALYSIS

### Demographic Data:

Table number 1:

GENDER	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	46	71.87%
Female	18	28.12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table number 2:

MARITAL STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Married	13	20.31%
Unmarried	51	79.68%
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Interpretation:** There are 64 respondents in total, out of which 46 are male and 18 are female. The male makes up 71.87% of the total respondents, whereas the female makes up 28.12%. Another demography that was recorded was of the marital status. 13 respondents were married, whereas 51 respondents mentioned that they were unmarried. Married respondents were just 20.31% of the total whereas majority were unmarried, about 79.68%.

### Job stress and its sources:

Table number 3:

POINT	Strongly Agree	%	Agree	%	Neutral	%	Disagree	%	Strongly Disagree	%
Positive influence of stress on Job Performance and Productivity	13	20.3%	18	28.1%	22	34.4%	10	15.6%	1	1.6%
Deadlines a source of stress	23	35.9%	22	34.4%	14	21.9%	4	6.3%	1	1.6%
Organization appreciating your work	8	12.5%	26	40.6%	18	28.1%	8	12.5%	2	3.1%
Lack of Security causing Job Stress	4	6.3%	17	26.6%	19	29.7%	17	26.6%	7	10.9%
Working environment seems to be safe and secure.	17	26.6%	30	46.9%	9	14.1%	7	10.9%	1	1.6%

Health problems due to pressure or stress	5	7.8%	22	34.4%	16	25.0%	13	20.3%	8	12.5%
Enjoying the Job Role	12	18.8%	27	42.2%	20	31.3%	5	7.8%	0	0.0%
Nature of your job affecting responsibility towards the organization	10	15.6%	26	40.6%	20	31.3%	8	12.5%	0	0.0%
You can handle job stress without the help of an outside force	4	6.3%	10	15.6%	23	35.9%	27	42.2%	0	0.0%
Job affects your family	4	6.3%	23	35.9%	18	28.1%	9	14.1%	10	15.6%
You have control over your life at work	7	10.9%	9	14.0%	10	15.6%	22	34.3%	16	25%

**Interpretation:** From the above table it is found that, 34.4% people can't say that there is a positive influence of stress on Job Performance and productivity, whereas a high number of 28.1% Agree that it is true and only 1.6% strongly disagree. This indicates that stress is linked to lower organisational performance, lower employee overall performance and productivity, a high error rate and poor work quality, and absence owing to health issues such as anxiety, emotional disorder, work-life balance, and depression.

When we consider deadline as a source of stress it is observed that the highest number of 35.9% strongly agree and only 1.6% of population strongly disagree to it. It is one of the major cause of stress and anxiety about performance may be a source of stress for even the most talented employees. In fact, according to a recent survey by CareerCast, over 1,000 readers discovered that 71% have higher than moderate stress in the workplace. Respondents were asked to rate their job stress levels on a scale of 0 to 10 – 0 denoting no stress at all, and 10 signifying high, constant stress. 71% of respondents scored 7 or higher on the scale [CareerCast News, Feb 15, 2017].

Highest number of 40.6% Agree that appreciation of the work by the organization helps to reduce stress while 28.1% are unable to consider this is a reason for the stress or not. Only a small population of 3.1% population strongly disagree this as a source of stress. Gratitude can improve a person's overall health, improve sleep habits, boost metabolism, and reduce stress. This has a direct impact on job performance and employee relationship. Employee appreciation improves not only performance and engagement, but also the employee's health and well-being.

Maximum number of 29.7% can't say that lack of security is a reason behind job stress. Whereas a tie of 26.6% of population agree as well as disagree that this is a reason behind job stress and it becomes difficult to conclude that there is any positive or negative influence. Whereas certain studies have proved that job insecurity impacts not only health and performance, but also physical problems that can continue for years after leaving a job. In a recent study with the title, 'Consequences of Job Insecurity on the Psychological and Physical Health of Greek Civil Servants' by Dimitra Nella, Efharis Panagopoulou, Nikiforos Galanis, Anthony Montgomery, and Alexis Benos [2015], workers who reported high levels of job insecurity felt depressed for about three years. This study highlights the immediate detrimental effects of job insecurity on the physical, psychological, and social functioning of employees.

We can see that 46.9% is almost the maximum population who agrees that lack of security and safety in working environment is a reason behind job stress, also 26.6% strongly agree to this. According to few articles, job stress can induce a loss of attention, which is a common cause of workplace mishaps. Workers should be monitored for signs of stress, according to safety authorities. Fatigues, difficulty in concentrating, low morale, and anxiety or impatience are all common symptoms.

Workers' mental health is also harmed by workplace stress where the 34.4% of population agree to this, and it leads to an increased risk of anxiety, burnout, depression, and drug abuse disorders. Stressed workers are more likely to indulge in unhealthy behaviours such as cigarette smoking, alcohol and drug misuse, and bad eating habits. While 25% can't say that stress can affect their health and 12.5% also disagree to it.

In the IT industry and the sample collected we find that 42.2% agree that they are enjoying the job role they have and there is no one who strongly disagree to it. Respondents do not seem to have any issues with the job role and like what they do. This shows that they have consciously chosen their professional path.

It seems that 40.6% agree that the nature of the job affects their responsibility towards the organization, whereas 31.3% can't say that it's true or not. Surprisingly, there is no one who strongly disagree. It is the



employee's responsibility to do the job duties to the best of their ability while following to business regulations and procedures. Workers should address any queries or difficulties they have to manage and work for the company's benefit. Many people are inspired by the difficulties they face in their workplace. However, when pressure from work responsibilities and other so-called 'stressors' becomes severe and persistent in comparison to one's perceived ability to deal, stress can result.

42.2% Of the respondents disagree that they can handle job stress without the help of an outside force. This is a proof that interventions to curb the job stress is clearly required in workplace. It is the employee's responsibility to identify their what is going downhill and be vocal about it. The organisation's responsibility is to take appropriate steps to make the place comfortable for the employees and help them lower their stress with interventions.

Majority of the respondents, that is 35.9% agree that the employees job affects the family. It is possible that due disequilibrium in work life balance, there seems to be a disturbance in the family.

34.3% respondents disagree that they have control over your life at work. Leading up to this, 25% strongly disagree. It can be seen that having no control over their life and their personal decisions could be one of the sources of stress for an employee.

### Verbal Interpretation Data:

Table number 4:

VERBAL INTERPRETATION	Yes		Sometimes/ Depends/ Maybe/ Can't Say		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
It is difficult to work in an environment where your friends are not around	35	54.68%	18	28.12%	11	17.18%

It is difficult to work when you have had a quarrel with your Spouse/parent/child/sibling	24	37.5%	19	29.68%	21	32.81%
Spending quality time with your family help you cope up with stress	21	32.81%	27	42.18%	16	25%

**Interpretation:** According to the verbal interpretation, it can be learned that most of the respondents find it difficult to work in an environment where their friends are not around. As 54.68% respondents have said yes to this. Majority of respondents believe that it is difficult to work when they have had a quarrel with their spouse/sibling/parent/child. Whereas close to the majority, around 32.81% of respondents believe that it is not so. When it comes to whether spending quality time with their family helps them to cope up with stress, majority have a neutral view towards it with 42.18%. Leading to this, around 32.81% believe that it does.

### CHI SQUARE TEST:

The chi-square test for independence, also called Pearson's chi-square test or the chi-square test of association, is used to discover if there is a relationship between two categorical variables.

- a) **To analyse the association between Gender vs quality time spent with the family to help you cope up with stress**

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.165a	2	.921
Likelihood Ratio	.162	2	.922
N of Valid Cases	64		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .84.

**Interpretation:** From the above table it can be observed that there is no significant association between gender and spending quality time with family help to cope up with stress with Pearson Chi-Square= >0.05. From our study and its interpretation, we have observed that there is a no significant pattern of events identified by male or female in relation to spending quality time with family. There is no big differences in

how male or female perceived stressors events in the family. Also there is no major difference found between male and female as who is more concerned with relationships and others with their work and self which indicates that this generation people have equal division of household labour and now-a-days the traditional gender role is eliminated. As the gap between different gender is melting down, creating an equalized family, so the stressors are also eliminated.

- b) **To analyse the association between Marital Status vs difficulty to work when you have quarrel with your spouse/ parent/child/ sibling.**

#### Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	.749 <sup>a</sup>	2	.688
Likelihood Ratio	.778	2	.678
N of Valid Cases	64		

a. 2 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.25.

**Interpretation:** From the above table it can be observed that there is no significant association between marital status and difficulty to work when you have quarrel with your spouse/ parent/child/ sibling Pearson Chi-Square =  $>0.05$ .

From our study it is observed that the relationship conflicts according to the marital status is actually healthy and it provides an opportunity to learn more about the partner or other family members about the work can be done together as a team and it eliminates the stressors related to the job that is being done. Theories have proved the idea of fights happening in a healthy way for the working people whether they are married or unmarried. The person being married or unmarried becomes proactive and aggressive in their job to take care of the financial support and this leads in resolving quarrels and issues happening in a positive way to reduce the stress. This helps to increase the dedication and the responsibility to the work, also it increases quality time with the family and the number of quarrels decreases leading to improved productivity and less stress.

## FINDINGS

Through the study, we zeroed down to a few of the sources that could be seen to be the sources of stress. It is listed below,

- Deadline in the project/jobs seems to be an important source of stress as it is observed that most of the respondents have strongly agreed to it. It is one of the major causes of stress which can affect even the most talented employees.
- Lack of appreciation is seen as another reason causing stress. Gratitude can improve a person's overall health, improve sleep habits, boost metabolism, and reduce stress. When employees are appreciated, this directly impacts their performance at work.
- Analysis also reveals that lack of security and safety in the work place is another reason behind job stress. When the employee doesn't feel safe in the environment they are working at, it is possible that their stress is high. Insecurity could be of the job position or lack of protection.
- When the employee doesn't have control over their life at work, it leads to stress. This could include, one not able to take decisions for themselves or their job role. Also when significant changes are executed without consulting the one that has to deal with the stress.

## CONCLUSION

Some of the studies have shown that stress which can be managed in a healthy manner can actually lead to increased brain functioning, a stronger immune system and better preparation for stress in the future, which can positively affect emotional health with your work and home life. But if stress level goes out of control, it can cause medical problems such as depression, anxiety, fluctuating BP and more. This is when interventions to improve the organization of work and reduce the impact of stressful jobs on our health can be conducted in a wide variety of ways. Alterations can be made at the level of the job through laws and regulations.

The purpose of stress management and effective interventions is having a balanced life in which work, relationships, relaxation, and fun and the resilience to hold up under pressure are steady and where one can meet challenges head on without any problem.

## INTERVENTIONS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT:

**Psychological counselling** – For employees who are facing serious problems in coping up stress should get psychological counselling or should be advised for therapy from a certified counsellor.

**Virtual Annual Family Day programmes** - By getting appraised in front of their family, the family would also feel proud and belonged which will not just reduce the stress but also the attrition rate as such events develop a connection between the organisation and the employees.

**Virtual Informal weekly meeting**- This will help the organisation to evaluate the reasons behind employee stress and find out interventions to reduce it. Sometimes an informal session of conversation amongst the employees and the team leader is enough for them to vent out. Retrospection and planning could be a part of such sessions as well.

**Access to fitness centres, designing job roles and environment**- This will lead to maximum movement of the employees internally and physically which will benefit their health. Organisations could promote usage of fitness bands such as- Fitbit, Apple Watch, etc and ask the employees to track the number of calories they are burning in a day.

**Employee autonomy in decision making**- This will help employees to make maximum decision for their own job. Giving much power to alter the job according to them and making it flexible as per the employee so that maximum productivity can be achieved from them.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The current study was confined to the IT sector employees which can be further extended to different sectors to find the interventions in order to reduce job stress. Also, the sample size can be increased so that broad picture of the scenario could be obtained. And the mean generated by the sample data creates a central stage effect which results in selecting the middle option for the conclusion as the best option.

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