



MANAGING STRESS AT WORKPLACE

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Abstract

Workplace stress is a common problem that affects employee's health, performance and overall organisational success. This paper highlights major stressors such as heavy workload, tight deadlines, poor work-life balance and explores practical ways to manage them, including mindfulness, time management, exercise, flexible schedules and employee support programs. With supportive leadership and proactive strategies, organisations can build a healthier work environment where employees feel valued and can perform at their best.

Keywords: Work-life Balance, Clear Communication, Mental health, Stress

Introduction

Stress is the body's natural reaction to pressure or challenges. It can make you feel tense, worried or overwhelmed. In small doses, stress can be useful it helps you stay alert, meet deadlines and respond to danger. But when stress continues for too long, it can harm both physical and mental health. If the body becomes overly sensitive to stress or faces too many stressors at once, it can disrupt well-being.

When stressed, the body reacts physically by raising blood pressure, tightening muscles, and increasing alertness. Everyday triggers like loud noises, aggressive behaviour, or sudden frightening moment scan activate this response.

Types of Stress

1. Acute Stress

This is short-term stress that comes and goes. Everyone experiences it. In the workplace, it can be caused by tight deadlines, conflicting tasks, difficult co-workers or managers, job insecurity, or an overwhelming workload. It often leads to irritability, anxiety, difficulty focusing, or feeling physically tense.

2. Episodic Acute Stress

This type of stress happens during intense, sudden situations. It may last from minutes to hours. Examples include working in high-pressure environments, receiving difficult performance feedback, or facing unexpected changes like layoffs or sudden shifts in job duties.

3. Chronic Stress

Chronic stress builds up over a long period and can last months or years. It comes from ongoing issues such as a demanding work environment, financial struggles, long-term health problems, or living in stressful surroundings. This type of stress can be especially damaging if not addressed.

Methods to measure stress:

1. Physiological Measurements:

These methods track how the body physically reacts to stress. Signs like a faster heart rate, higher blood pressure, and increased cortisol levels can be measured through simple tests. They give clear, objective information about how stressed the body really is.

2. Psychological Measurements:

Psychological assessments rely on self-reported experiences to evaluate stress levels. These tools help understand subjective experiences of stress. They are widely used in clinical and research settings.

3. Behavioural Measurements:

Stress often shows up in changes to everyday habits. Someone might struggle to sleep, eat more or less than usual, lose focus, or become less productive. Increased absences from work or school can also be a sign. Observing these behaviours can help identify stress early and guide people toward healthier coping strategies.

Best ways and approaches:

People can manage or prevent stress and avoid feeling overwhelmed by adopting simple lifestyle habits:

- 1. Exercise:** Regular physical activity can help reduce stress and improve memory, though more research is still needed.
- 2. Limiting Alcohol, Drugs and Caffeine:** These substances don't reduce stress and can actually make it worse.
- 3. Healthy Nutrition:** Eating a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables supports the body during stressful times, while poor nutrition can increase stress.
- 4. Priority Management:** Organizing daily tasks and focusing on what needs attention first can ease pressure. Looking at what you've achieved can boost motivation.
- 5. Time Management:** Making time for relaxation, hobbies, and proper planning helps keep stress under control.
- 6. Breathing and Relaxation Techniques:** Activities like meditation, yoga, massage, and deep breathing help calm the body and mind.
- 7. Open Communication:** Talking about stress with family, friends, or colleagues can lighten emotional load and lead to helpful solutions.

Many people are so busy that they miss signs of stress. Noticing these early signs helps with better stress management. If work becomes overwhelming, adjusting work habits or discussing concerns with a supervisor can help. Enjoyable activities like walking, reading, listening to music, or spending time with loved ones or pets can also reduce stress. Hobbies such as going to the gym or joining a choir can offer additional relief.

Review of Literature

Conn et al. (2009) investigated the function of work site physical activity in stress relief. Their meta-analysis, reported in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, determined that workers who participated in frequent physical exercises like walking, yoga, and strength training had lower cortisol levels and better moods. The study highlights the significance of incorporating fitness programs and ergonomic workplace environments to promote movement and alleviate stress.

Demerouti et al. (2001) created the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to understand how job demands and resources impact employee stress and burnout. Reporting in the Journal of Applied Psychology, the researchers determined that high job demands (work pressure, emotional labour, long work hours) are associated with greater stress, but job resources (autonomy, social support, job security) moderate this effect. The research indicates that job redesign interventions that enhance flexibility and employee control can have a substantial impact on workplace stress.

Hulsheger et al. (2013) examined the effects of mindfulness on stress management at work. The article was published in the Journal of Applied Psychology and revealed that employees who used mindfulness meditation

experienced lower emotional exhaustion, better emotion regulation, and enhanced job satisfaction. The study implies that mindfulness interventions are especially helpful in high-stress workplaces, fostering emotional well-being and combating burnout.

Richardson & Rothstein (2008) did a meta-analysis of 36 occupational stress management programs to evaluate their efficacy. The research, which appeared in the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, identifies that cognitive-behavioural interventions (CBT) are the most effective at decreasing workplace stress. Strategies like reframing negative thoughts, relaxation training, and problem-solving skills improved the well-being of employees considerably. The study points out that CBT-based stress management programs improve resilience and help with overall job satisfaction.

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand how frequently employees experience stress and their perceived stress levels at intervals.
2. To examine whether the organization provides any stress management resources or support systems.
3. To examine which practices employees find most useful in reducing workplace stress.
4. To understand strategies that help employees effectively manage their workload to minimize stress.
5. To examine the role of self-care practices in maintaining mental and emotional well-being at work.

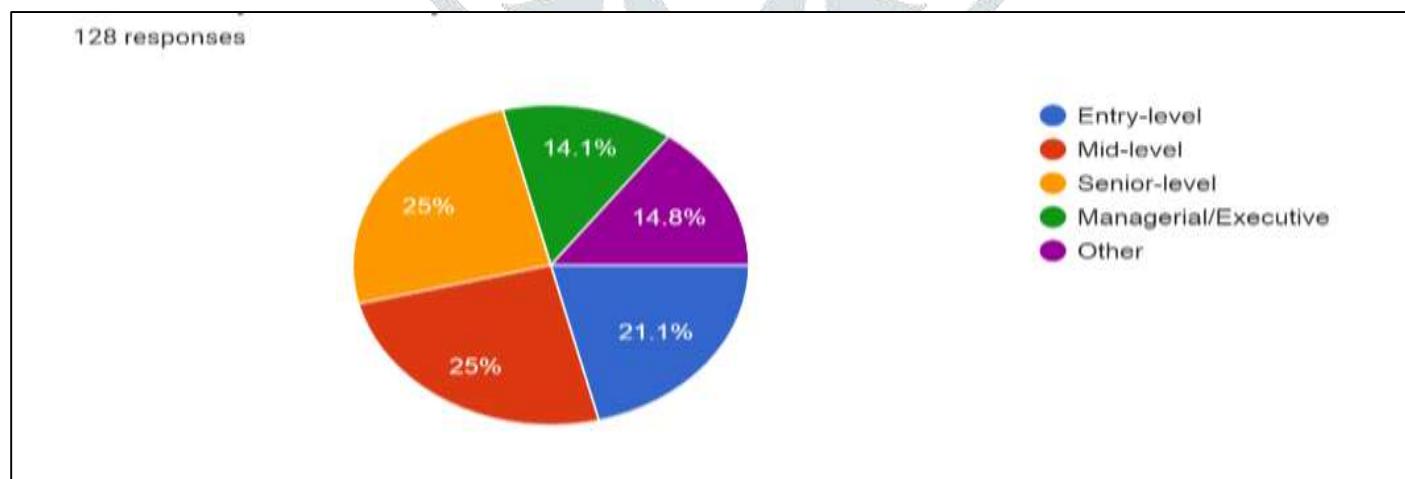
Research Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive, quantitative design to understand workplace stress levels, organizational support and effective stress-management practices among employees. Primary data was collected through a questionnaire, which enabled efficient gathering of responses from individuals with varying work experience ranging from less than 1 year to more than 5.5 years. The study focused on aspects such as stress frequency, support mechanisms, helpful coping practices, workload management behaviours, and employees' perceptions of breaks and self-care.

A purposive sampling method was used to ensure participants had relevant industry experience and exposure to workplace stress. The sample size consisted of 128 respondents, representing employees from diverse sectors, which provided meaningful insights into stress patterns and organizational practices across different work environments.

Data Analysis:

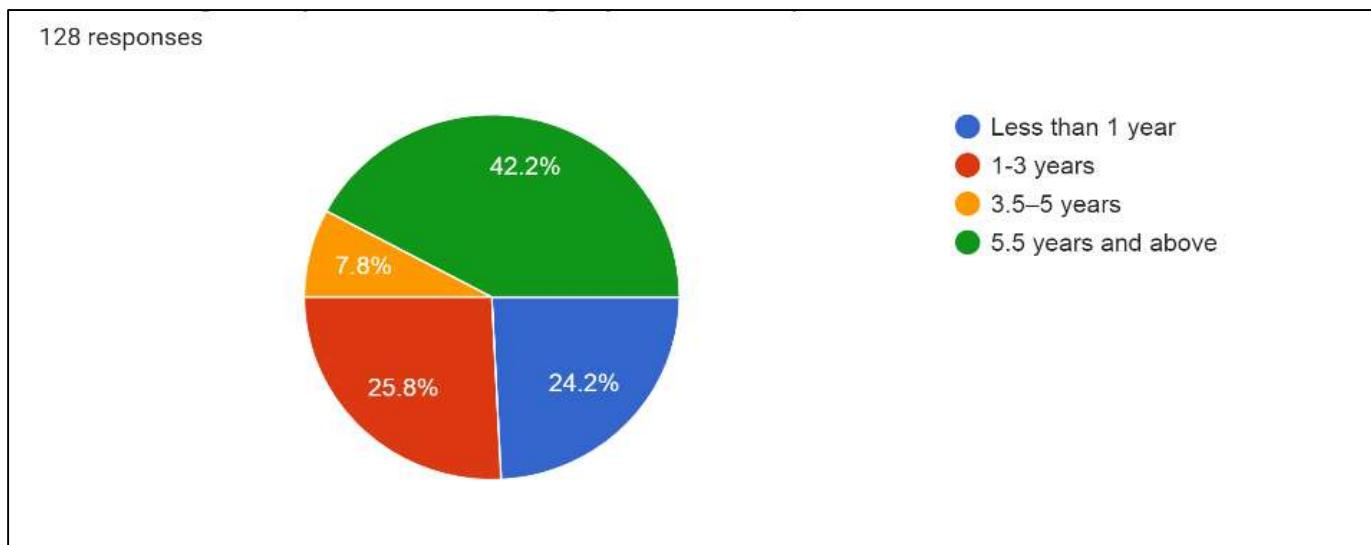
Q.1. What is your current job role?



Interpretation:

The chart shows current job role of 128 respondents i.e. Entry-level (21.1%), Mid-level (25%) and Senior-level (25%) roles, Managerial/Executive (14.1%) and Others (14.8%). This suggests a well-distributed workforce with a higher concentration to mid-to-senior roles.

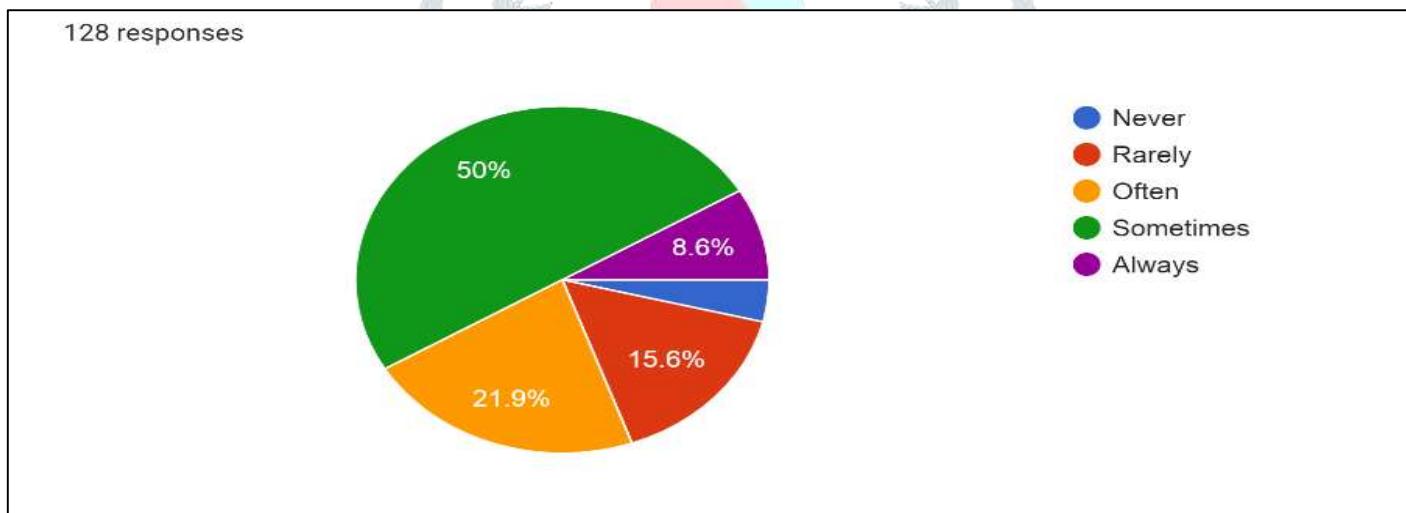
Q.2. What is your current job role?



Interpretation:

The above chart shows that about 42.2% of employees have been with the organisation for over 5.5 years, showing strong stability. Another 25.8% have 1–3 years of experience, while 24.2% are new to their roles. Only 7.8% fall in the middle range, suggesting the workforce is mainly made up of long-term staff and recent hires.

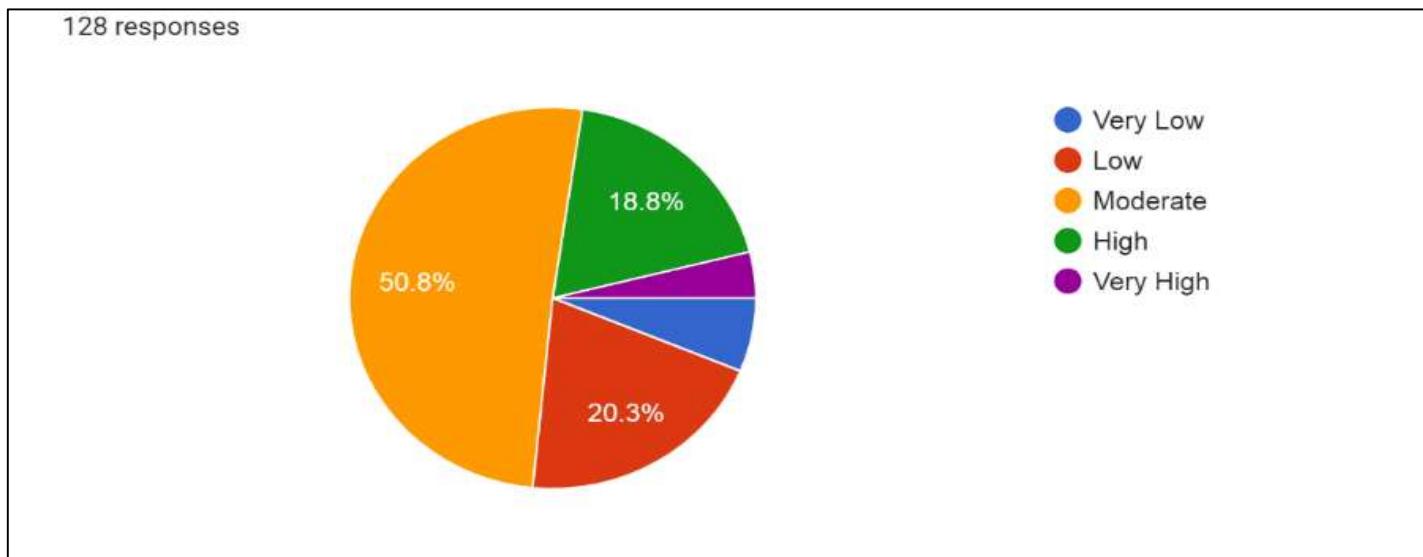
Q.3. How often do you feel stressed at work?



Interpretation:

The above chart shows that about half of the employees feel stressed at times, and 21.9% experience stress often. Only a small group rarely or never feels stressed. Overall, 71.9% deal with stress atleast occasionally.

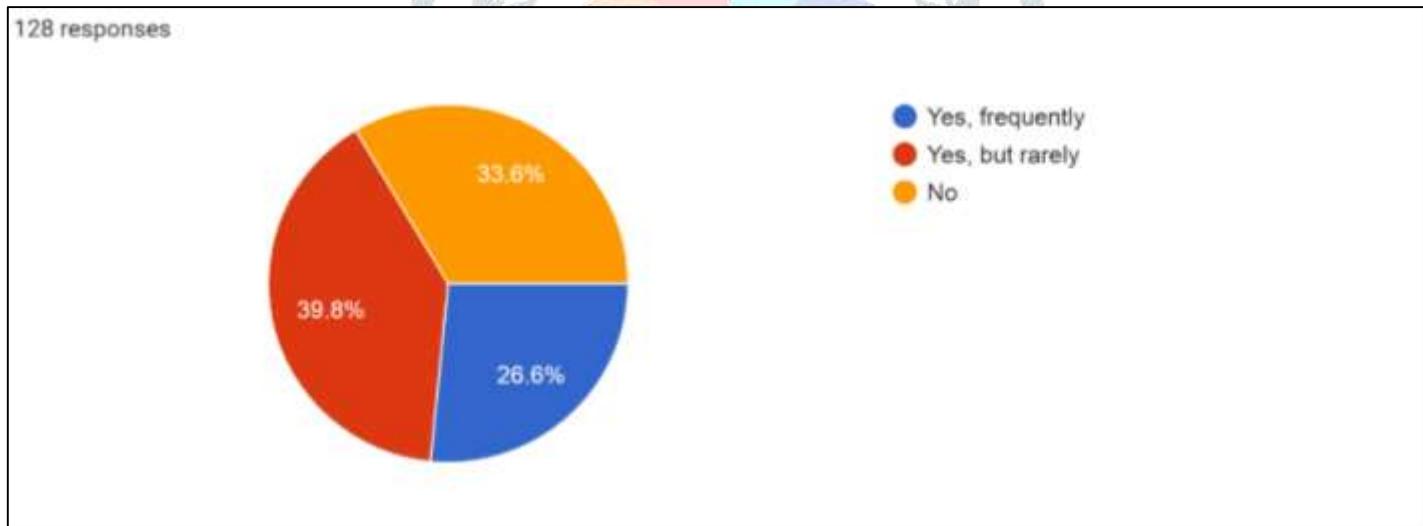
Q.4. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your overall stress level at work?



Interpretation:

The above chart shows that 50.8% rate moderate stress, which reflects a prevalent yet tolerable stress level. 20.3% rate low stress, indicating a good work environment for a portion of people. 18.9% rate high stress, reflecting the presence of work issues. Few experience very high stress, representing extreme pressure.

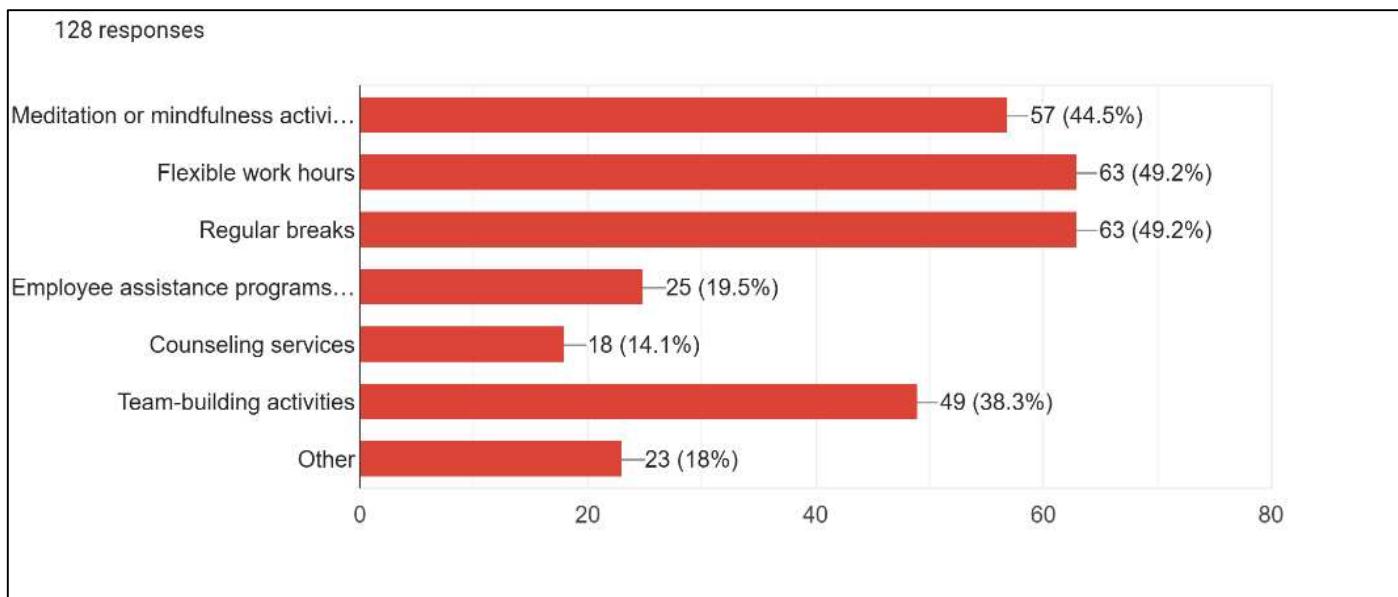
Q.4. Does your organisation provide any support to manage the stress at workplace?



Interpretation:

39.8% get support rarely, reflecting few stress management programs. 33.6% get no support, reflecting a deficiency in workplace wellness programs. 26.6% get frequent support, reflecting that some companies care about employee well-being.

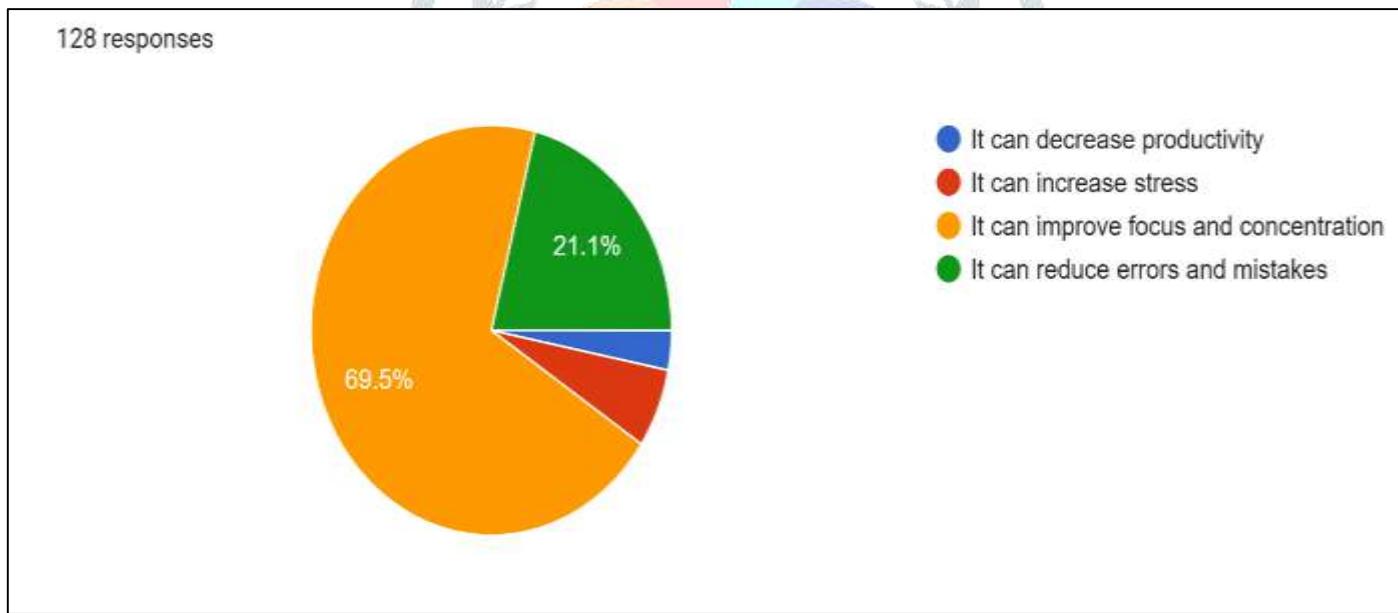
Q.5. Which of the Stress management practices do you personally find effective?



Interpretation:

Flexible hours and regular breaks are the top stress-relief choices, with nearly half of employees relying on them. Many also benefit from mindfulness, and 38.3% feel team-building helps reduce stress.

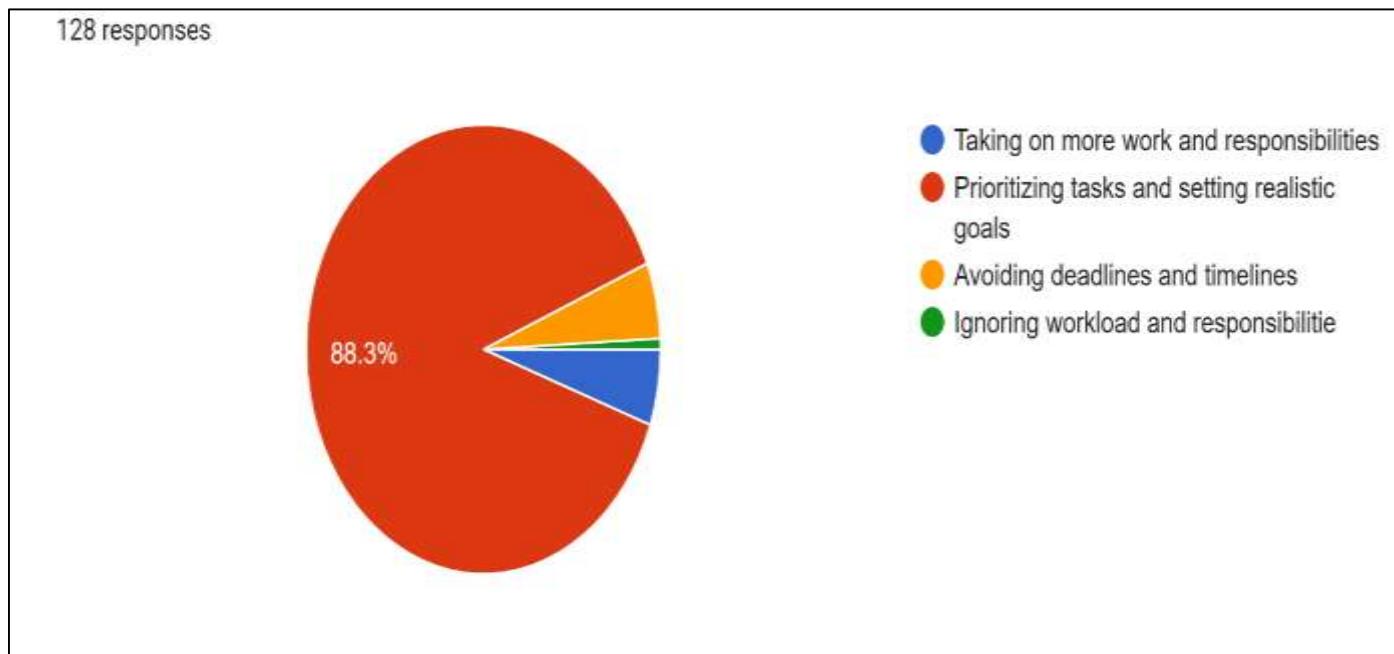
Q.6. What is the importance of taking breaks in managing workplace stress?



Interpretation:

Most employees (69.5%) believe breaks help them focus better and 21.1% say breaks reduce mistakes. Very few think taking breaks hurt productivity. Overall, workers see breaks as essential for staying efficient and managing stress. Encouraging regular, well-timed breaks can boost both well-being and performance in the workplace.

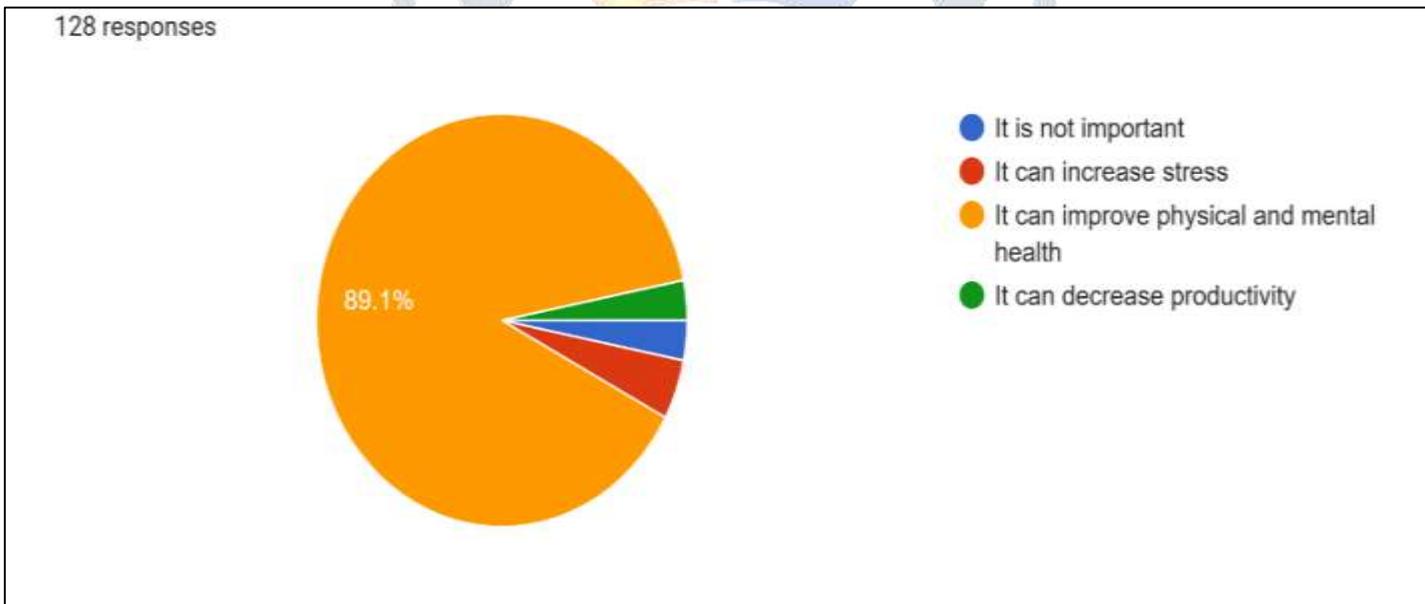
Q.7. Which of the following is a way to manage workload and reduce stress?



Interpretation:

Most employees (88.3%) believe that prioritizing tasks and setting realistic goals is the most effective way to manage stress. Very few feel that taking on more work, ignoring deadlines or avoiding responsibilities is impractical and ineffective.

Q.8. What is the role of self-care in managing workplace stress?



Interpretation:

Almost 90% of employees believe self-care is essential for maintaining both physical and mental well-being. Only a small number feel it's not important, self-care increases stress, or reduces productivity, making these views much less common.

Suggestions

- Introduce structured stress-support programs like counselling and wellness initiatives to address the lack of organizational support.

- Implement flexible working hours and encourage regular breaks to help employees manage stress effectively.
- Train managers to identify burnout early and provide empathetic, timely support to team members.
- Promote mindfulness practices such as meditation and breathing exercises to reduce daily stress levels.
- Strengthen workload management by encouraging realistic goal-setting and proper task prioritization.
- Establish a culture of open communication where employees can share stress concerns without hesitation.
- Conduct periodic team-building activities to improve collaboration and reduce interpersonal stress.
- Encourage self-care habits and provide resources that help employees maintain their overall well-being.

Conclusion:

Managing workplace stress requires both individual and organizational efforts. Remote and hybrid schedules help employees balance work and personal life, reducing stress. Techniques like meditation, relaxation and deep breathing strengthen coping skills and emotional resilience. Counselling and wellness services give employees the professional support they need. Managers should encourage open communication, provide constructive feedback and prioritize employee well-being. Setting realistic goals, breaking tasks into smaller steps and distributing work fairly help prevent burnout.

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