

**JYOTI NIVAS COLLEGE
AUTONOMOUS
POST GRADUATION CENTRE**



PRESENTS

SAGEEZA

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ON

**FACTORS AFFECTING EMPLOYEE
WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH
SUPPORT IN I.T. FIELD**

INTRODUCTION:



The information technology industry in India comprises information technology services and business process outsourcing, the IT industry generates around \$245 billion US dollars in financial year 2023. The domestic revenue of the IT industry is estimated at \$51 billion, and export revenue is estimated at \$194 billion in FY 2023. The information technology and business project management sector employ around 5.4 million people as of March 2023 and employees of this industry make significant contributions to taxes. Since it's one of the significant GDP contributors and employs more than 5 million people, it's a matter of great concern about the employee's wellbeing and mental health in the IT industry.

In India there is intense competition, tight deadlines for the project completion and ever-changing landscape and technological advancements in the IT industry along with these there is a large infusion of new graduates in the market with new desired tech skills which are in demand, so there is a need for people in the tech industry to constantly upgrade their knowledge and learn new technologies and do side projects to learn and gain good knowledge apart from their daily job. As a result, people who are working in the IT industry are having heavy workloads and relentless job demands which leads to higher stress and potential burnout. This situation has prompted a closer examination of the factors influencing the mental health and overall wellbeing of employees in this dynamic sector.

One significant challenge that the IT professionals face is maintaining good work-life balance. Long working hours and the constant expectation of being available and sync ups with the other teams or clients in other time zones which will be late in evening or at night especially in India this can affect personal time, social

interactions and family commitments which leads to dissatisfaction and isolation. This will lead to no boundaries between personal and professional life and causes strain to mental health.

The other aspect which greatly influences mental wellbeing is the ever changing landscape in the industry there are technological disruptions like the rise of the Artificial Intelligence and ChatGPT which can replace the low skilled professionals in the coming future and economic situations like recession which causes mass layoff which have a negative adverse impact because lot of professionals have home loans which are in crores of rupees and many other loans because of their lifestyle decision the thought that they might get laid off and how to repay the loans and maintain their family which leads to intense stress and constant anxiety.

The organizational culture also matters a lot in shaping the mental health support available to employees. Companies have a lot of programs about mental health for their employee's wellbeing but the stigma surrounding the mental health issues may deter employees from seeking help.

There are many concerns which arises due to lack of proper mental health such as high blood pressure due to constant anxiety, lack of motivation to do other things such as hobbies, socialising because professionals are exhausted by work and health concerns such as diabetes as pointed out by some articles.

In light of this issue companies are taking proactive steps to address the employee wellbeing and mental health such as creating self-help groups, mental health awareness campaigns, dedicated leaves for mental wellbeing, flexible work policies and reimbursement of fees paid to join any physical activity like gym or other sports which helps in reducing stress. The IT industry is constantly evolving and ensuring the wellbeing and mental health support to its employees, by acknowledging these factors and addressing them the IT industry can create an environment where professionals can flourish both personally and professionally.

HIGH WORKLOAD AND STRESS IN THE IT FIELD

When one has more responsibilities than they can perform in a given capacity, it is said that they are carrying a heavy burden or simply put – “a high workload”. It could be the consequence of a company aiming to cut costs, but it could also emerge from the way a person handles or delegates work.



Increasing workloads are the leading source of stress for information technology workers, according to a recent survey. Other sources of stress include office politics, balancing work and personal lives, and commuting. But companies seem to be addressing the problem by offering perks - such as training and additional paid time off - that enhance quality of life.

Meta Group released a survey of 500 compensation and IT specialists that found that companies on average have doubled their training budgets since last year. Businesses reported spending an average of \$1,000 to \$1,500 per employee to train IT staff this year vs. \$500 to \$1,000 last year.

The IT field is known for its high-pressure environment. With ever-changing technologies and demanding deadlines, IT professionals are often under a great deal of stress. This can lead to a number of negative consequences, including burnout, anxiety, and depression.

OTHER MAJOR CAUSES OF STRESS IN THE IT WORKPLACE

There are a number of factors that can contribute to workload stress in IT. These include:

- High expectations - IT professionals are often expected to work long hours and meet tight deadlines. This can be especially stressful when there are not enough resources or support available.
- Complexity of work - IT work can be very complex, requiring a deep understanding of technology and business processes. This can be challenging and stressful, especially when there is a lot of pressure to get things right.
- Lack of control - IT professionals often have little control over their workload or the pace of work. This can be frustrating and stressful, especially when things are not going according to plan.

- Interpersonal conflict - IT professionals may also experience stress due to interpersonal conflict with colleagues or clients. This can be particularly difficult to deal with when there are high stakes involved.

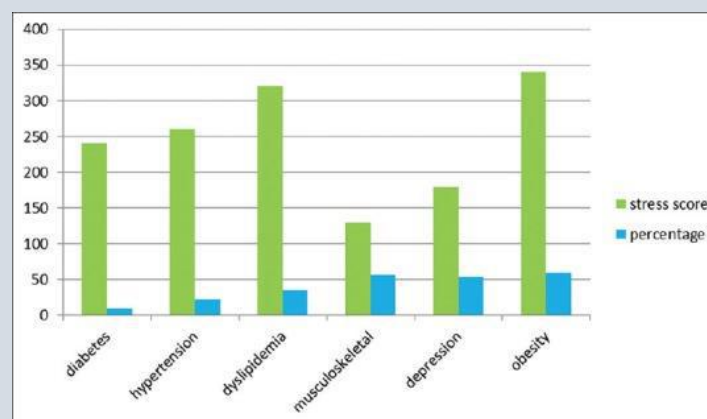
Thus, every employee within the workforce is constantly impacted by a world that is constantly changing and in motion. A VUCA world is characterized by turbulences, high demands, and urgency. The result is high strain, stress, and maybe burnout for the person working and living in a VUCA society. (VUCA – Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity).

STRESS AND ITS ADVERSE EFFECTS ON HEALTH

Work overload has long been associated with detrimental effects on both the physical and mental health of employees. According to a World Health Organisation study, people who work long hours (as compared to individuals working 35–40 hours per week), have a 35% higher risk of stroke and a 17% higher risk of heart disease. Employees in the digital service sector, particularly those coming from design, software, and architecture organisations, are frequently overworked because of the hectic atmosphere they work in every day.

IT industry has become one of the fastest growing industries in India. Strong demand over the past few years has placed India among the fastest growing IT markets in Asia-Pacific region.

“The stress score was higher in employees who developed diabetes, hypertension, dyslipidemia and obesity. Most of the employees who were obese had a higher stress score. Of the metabolic disorders, employees with higher stress score had dyslipidemia, followed by hypertension and diabetes” – As per research done in Chennai.



Health problems and stress scores in IT, BPO employees

The impacts of an intense workload go beyond the deterioration of the health of the workers. Additionally, team members are also prone to social and emotional collapse. Overworked employees struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance, experience more stress, and perform poorly overall.

COPING WITH HIGH WORKLOAD STRESS

Workload stress is a real problem in the IT field. It can have a number of negative consequences for IT professionals, including burnout, decreased productivity, and increased health problems. There are a number of things that IT professionals can do to manage workload stress:

- **Relaxation techniques** -The physiological effects of the fight-or-flight response are mitigated by relaxation. Progressive muscle relaxation, for instance, aids in easing anxiety-related muscle tension.
- **Mindfulness** - Being mindful is having the capacity to pay attention to the current moment with openness, acceptance, and curiosity. When one dwells on the past, worries about the future, or engages in self-criticism, stress can be made worse. Regularly practicing mindfulness, can train the brain to stop such ruminating habits.
- **Setting boundaries** - It is important to set boundaries between work and personal life. This means not checking work emails or taking work calls outside of work hours.
- **Taking breaks** - It is also important to take breaks throughout the day. This will help to reduce stress and improve concentration.
- **Delegation of tasks** – Effective delegation of tasks to others can be very helpful. This will free up time so that more focus can be used on the most important things.
- **Asking for help** – Feeling of being overwhelmed can be normal, but one should not feel afraid to ask for help from their manager or colleagues.

WORK LIFE IMBALANCE IN THE IT FIELD

Worklife imbalance is the inability of professionals to manage their schedules in a way that allows them to simultaneously pursue their personal and professional goals.



One can feel more motivated, like their work more, and find more time for friends and family if you have a healthy work-life balance.

Continuous dedication may be required to learn how to balance demanding job schedules with personal obligations.

For many professionals, it can be extremely difficult to balance their work aspirations with their personal requirements.

REASON:

There are various reasons for work life imbalance in the life of the employees some are

Individual career ambitions: Individuals who are ambitious might prioritize their career goals over other aspects of life, which will lead to imbalance between work and personal life.

Family or work pressure: Individuals may feel pressure from family or work to meet certain expectations which could make it difficult to balance roles and responsibilities.

Difficulty saying "No": Some employees find it hard to say no ending up taking more work and causing imbalance.

Talent supply market competition: To stay competitive and secure their positions employees may feel the need to take more tasks and work longer hours.

Job insecurity: The fear of losing job might also be a reason for imbalance as employees try to put more focus on securing their job.

PROBLEM FACED DUE TO WORK LIFE IMBALANCE

- Reduced productivity
- Inability to meet deadlines
- Decline in health
- Absenteeism
- Limited social life
- Neglect personal life and family
- Affecting mental health
- Will experience tension and a constant sense of pressure

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Often, work takes precedence over everything else in our lives. Desire to succeed professionally can push us to set aside our own well-being.



Creating a harmonious work-life balance or work-life integration is critical, though, to improve not only physical, emotional and mental well-being, but it's also important for career.

Balancing professional and personal life can be challenging, but it's essential.

SUGGESTION

- Organization should implement good work life balance politics and should also see that employees have sufficient awareness about the policies.
- The company might consider implementing flexible work arrangements, such as part-time work with a flexible attendance, flexible leave, and decreased or comparable pay, as well as a working arrangement enabling staff members to work from home in certain circumstances.
- When employers express even the smallest amount of concern, employees may feel a strong feeling of connection to their organisations.
- Some programmes, child care choices (for working mothers), adequate insurance policies, and other can actually change the way that the staff thinks.

JOB INSECURITY IN THE IT FIELD

A significant element influencing IT professional's happiness and mental health is job insecurity. New technologies are always being developed, which causes the IT industry to change frequently. This can make it challenging for IT workers to keep current on the most recent knowledge and abilities, which can result in feelings of job instability. Additionally, there is fierce competition in the IT industry, with many talented people vying for the same positions. IT professionals may experience emotions of insecurity as a result because they fear being fired or replaced by someone else.

The following are some particular elements that may result in job insecurity in the IT industry:

Rapid technological change: new technologies are continually being developed, and this is transforming the IT industry. This can make it challenging for IT workers to keep current on the most recent knowledge and abilities, which can result in feelings of job instability.

High levels of competition: Many talented experts are vying for the same employment in the highly competitive IT field. IT professionals may experience emotions of insecurity as a result because they fear being fired or replaced by someone else.

Globalization: Businesses in the IT industry compete with one another on a global basis. Because businesses can attempt to outsource IT work to nations with lower labour costs, this could result in employment instability.

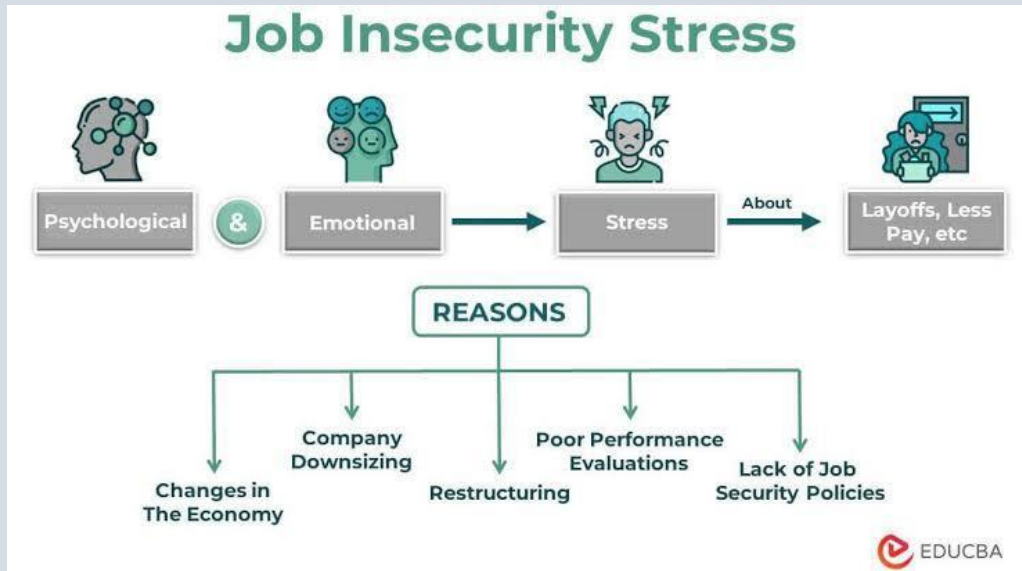
Economic downturns: As businesses trim expenses, economic downturns may result in layoffs in the IT industry. As a result, IT professionals may experience emotions of uneasiness as they worry about their jobs.

THE EFFECTS OF EMPLOYMENT UNCERTAINTIES ON WORKERS' MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH:

Job insecurities can significantly affect an IT professional's happiness and mental health. The following are some particular consequences of job insecurity:

- **Increased stress:** Job worries can raise stress levels, which can cause physical symptoms including headaches, stomach-aches, and trouble sleeping.
- **Depression:** Job anxieties can also result in depression, which can show signs including melancholy, hopelessness, and losing interest in once-enjoyable activities.
- **Anxiety:** Job insecurities can also lead to anxiety, which can manifest in symptoms such as worry, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating.
- **Burnout:** Job insecurities can contribute to burnout, which is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. Burnout can lead to a number of problems, including fatigue, irritability, and difficulty making decisions.

Job insecurities are a major factor affecting the well-being and mental health of IT professionals. There are a number of things that can be done to address job insecurities in the IT field, such as providing training and development opportunities, creating a supportive work environment, communicating openly and honestly, and offering mental health support. By taking these steps, companies can help IT professionals feel more confident and secure in their jobs.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

Fostering a positive and productive work environment requires promoting mental health awareness and support in the workplace.

Offer flexible work hours, remote work choices, or reduced workweeks to help employees properly manage their mental health demands. This can alleviate commuting stress and allow for a better work-life balance.



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Workplace mental health knowledge and assistance are critical for fostering a healthy and productive work environment. Here are several HR policies that can aid employees with their mental health:

1) **Mental Health Training and Education:** Make mental health training and education essential for all employees and supervisors in order to raise knowledge about mental health issues, recognise symptoms of distress, and decrease stigma associated with mental health difficulties. Provide resources and information about mental health support services that are available.

2) **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Provide employees with flexible work hours, remote work choices, or reduced workweeks to assist them in properly managing their mental health demands. This can lessen commuting stress and allow for a better work-life balance.

3) **Establish a policy:** Allowing staff to take mental health days off as needed. Encourage open communication and make sure employees are comfortable sharing their mental health problems with their managers.

4) **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP):** Provide an EAP that provides employees and their families with confidential counselling services, referrals to mental health professionals, and resources. Make certain that staff are aware of the programme and how to access it.

5) **Wellness Programmes:** Create mental health-focused wellness programmes such as mindfulness workshops, stress management training, yoga courses, or meditation sessions. Incentives or awards can be used to encourage engagement.

6) **Manager Mental Health help Training:** Teach managers how to recognise indicators of mental health difficulties in their team members and how to help them properly. Create a climate in which employees are comfortable discussing mental health issues.

7) **Mental Health Accommodations:** Provide reasonable accommodations for employees with mental health issues as required under disability regulations. Collaborate with employees to develop personalised plans to meet their mental health requirements.

8) **Return-to-Work Assistance:** Ensure a supportive return-to-work approach for employees who have been absent for an extended period of time due to mental health issues. Provide the necessary resources and support during their reintegration into the workplace.

9) **Encourage regular check-ins:** between managers and staff members so that they may talk about workload, stressors, and any difficulties they may be having. Employees should be able to voice their concerns at these open and non-judgmental meetings.

10) **Implement measures:** to address stress-causing factors in the job, such as an excessive workload, arbitrary deadlines, or a lack of resources. Review these regulations frequently, taking employee feedback into account as you do so.

11) **Confidentiality and Privacy:** Ensure that any information pertaining to a worker's mental health is handled with the utmost confidentiality and privacy. Such information should be handled discreetly and securely by HR and management.

12) **Encourage the creation:** of employee-led support networks or affinity groups so that staff members can connect with others who have experienced similar difficulties with their mental health.

CHALLENGES FACED BY I.T. PROFESSIONALS:



- 1) **High Stress Levels:** The IT field often involves tight deadlines, long working hours, and demanding projects. These factors contribute to high stress levels among IT professionals, which can lead to burnout, anxiety, and depression.
- 2) **Work-Life Imbalance:** The nature of IT work often requires professionals to be available around the clock, leading to a lack of work-life balance. This imbalance can negatively impact mental health by causing feelings of guilt, isolation, and an inability to disconnect from work-related stressors.
- 3) **Job Insecurity:** The rapid advancements in technology and automation can create a sense of job insecurity among IT professionals. Fear of being replaced by machines or outsourcing can lead to increased stress and anxiety.
- 4) **Isolation and Loneliness:** Many IT professionals spend a significant amount of time working independently or remotely, which can result in feelings of isolation and loneliness. Lack of social interaction and support networks can contribute to poor mental health outcomes.

- 5) **Perfectionism and Imposter Syndrome:** The IT field often attracts individuals with high standards and perfectionist tendencies. This drive for perfection can lead to increased pressure, self-doubt, and imposter syndrome, where individuals feel inadequate despite their accomplishments.

STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE MENTAL WELL-BEING:

- 1) **Self-Care:** IT professionals should prioritize self-care activities such as regular exercise, healthy eating, sufficient sleep, and engaging in hobbies or activities they enjoy. Taking breaks during the workday and setting boundaries between work and personal life are also essential.
- 2) **Seeking Support:** It is crucial for IT professionals to seek support from trusted friends, family members, or mental health professionals when needed. Sharing concerns or seeking guidance can help alleviate stress and prevent feelings of isolation.
- 3) **Building Resilience:** Developing resilience can help IT professionals cope with the challenges they face in their careers. This can be achieved through practicing mindfulness techniques, engaging in stress-reducing activities, and cultivating a positive mindset.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the IT field faces unique challenges that can significantly impact employee well-being and mental health. Several factors contribute to this situation:

1. **High Workload:** The IT industry often demands long hours, tight deadlines, and constant pressure to perform. This high workload can lead to stress, burnout, and fatigue, affecting employees' mental health.
2. **Job Insecurity:** The IT sector can be volatile, with rapid technological advancements and market fluctuations leading to job insecurity. Fear of losing their jobs can lead to increased stress and anxiety among IT professionals.
3. **Work-Life Imbalance:** The nature of IT work, such as on-call duties and project deadlines, can disrupt work-life balance. This imbalance can lead to reduced personal time and increased stress.
4. **Technostress:** Continuous exposure to technology and digital devices can lead to technostress, a condition where individuals feel overwhelmed and anxious about technology-related challenges.
5. **Lack of Social Interaction:** IT work can be isolating, with employees spending long hours in front of screens and limited face-to-face interactions. This isolation can negatively impact mental well-being.
6. **Poor Organizational Support:** Some IT companies may not prioritize employee well-being or lack appropriate support systems to address mental health concerns.

Mental health awareness in the IT field is gaining recognition as organizations understand the importance of supporting their employee's well-being. The challenges faced by IT professionals, such as high stress levels,

work-life imbalance, and job insecurity, can significantly impact their mental health. However, organizations are taking initiatives to address these challenges through mental health policies, training programs, EAPs, workplace wellness initiatives, and supportive work cultures. Additionally, IT professionals can promote their own mental well-being by practicing self-care, seeking support when needed, and building resilience.

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