

# A STUDY ON STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG IT PROFESSIONALS IN CHENNAI

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**Abstract:** *The last few years' evidence has accumulated from around the world to show that of the different types of stress that cause illness and disease the most common and most destructive is stress at work. Researchers have not only built up evidence showing links between industrial stresses in general and ill health but have even accumulated evidence showing that it is possible to link specific occupations with specific types of stress induced disease. Although there is absolutely no doubt that stress is killing many people, disabling many more and costing industry billions of pounds every year, there is one important question that has to be asked 'Why are we so susceptible to stress these days?' This study attempts to analyse the level of stress, the causes of stress, the consequences of stress and the initiatives taken by organisations in trying to help their employees in managing stress. This study is limited to IT professionals and is descriptive in nature. The study has been undertaken with the help of a questionnaire and has brought out meaningful insights.*

**Key Words:** *Stress management, types of stress, consequences, stress management initiatives.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The existence and importance of stress in industry was first recognized in America in 1956. A machine operator called James Carter cracked up while working on the General Motors Production line in Detroit. Mr. Carter had experienced what is now commonly known as a nervous breakdown and he sued General Motors claiming that the stresses of his job had contributed to his condition and was even successful in winning his case.

The last few years' evidence has accumulated from around the world to show that of the different types of stress that cause illness and disease the most common and most destructive is stress at work. Researchers have not only built up evidence showing links between industrial stresses in general and ill health but have even accumulated evidence showing that it is possible to link specific occupations with specific types of stress induced disease. No one is immune. The men or women on the shop floor are just as vulnerable as the men or women on the board. The man with virtually no responsibility may be just as vulnerable as the woman with an enormous amount. It is not just high-powered professionals who suffer from stress.

Although there is absolutely no doubt that stress is killing many people, disabling many more and costing industry billions of pounds every year, there is one important question that has to be asked '**Why are we so susceptible to stress these days?**'

The answer to this apparently unanswerable paradox is quite simple. Our bodies were designed a long, long time ago. We were not designed for the sort of world in which we live today. We were designed for world in which fighting and running were useful practical solutions to everyday problems. We were designed to cope with physical conformations with saber-toothed tigers.

### Statement of the Problem

Stress exists in every aspect of life. The IT environment poses stressful working conditions. The demands of meeting the required project deadlines added to this factor, things such as job repetition, potential job dissatisfaction, poor ergonomics or low pay results in higher level of stress.

If stress in the workplace is not on the agenda, the results of stress are revealed through higher absenteeism than other parts of the company, higher Worker's Compensation claims and ultimately in reduced customer satisfaction. This operations topic focuses on various approaches to managing stress. Raising the pay isn't necessarily the solution. There are many other creative means of managing stress.

This study focuses on the level of stress due to the working conditions, sources of stress, its consequences and the steps taken to manage stress in the work place. The present study is to make an attempt to mainly identify the level of stress, various sources of stress, its consequences and the stress management techniques adopted by organizations.

## 2. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

The nature of work is changing at whirlwind speed. Perhaps now more than ever before, job stress poses a threat to the health of workers and, in turn, to the health of organizations. Numerous surveys and studies confirm that occupational pressures and fears are far and away the leading source of stress.

An estimated 1 million workers are absent every day due to stress. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work reported that over half of the 550 million working days lost annually in the U.S. from absenteeism are stress related and that one in five of all last minute no-shows are due to job stress. If this occurs in key employees it can have a domino effect that spreads down the line to disrupt scheduled operations. A 2007 three year study conducted by one large corporation found that 60% of employee absences could be traced to psychological problems that were due to job stress.

### 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Steadman's Medical Dictionary (1982, 24<sup>th</sup> edition) defines stress as "a physical or psychological stimulus which when impinging upon an individual procedures strain or disequilibrium"

According to Eve Warren and Caroline Toll in the book, "The Stress and Work Book", the terms 'Stress' has been described to include any discomfort both emotional and physical discomfort produced due to anxiety, dissatisfaction and unhappiness within a person, so that the person is seriously disturbed and less able to hold a job. It is a feeling of helplessness and a desire to withdraw from the harshness of reality.

Kavitha (2012) found that especially married women face more stress than men in the organization and she viewed to be more specific married women faces more stress than the unmarried women. Swaminathan & Rajkumar S. (2013) found that an optimum level in which every individual can perform with his full capacity and identified three conditions responsible for work stress they are 1) Role overload 2) Role self-distance 3) Role stagnation.

Satija S. & Khan W. (2013) in their research work have highlighted that stress is as same as Job Stress that needs to be controlled at the workplace otherwise it will negatively affect employee's work attitudes & behaviour.

### 4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To measure the level of stress among IT professional working in Tier II companies in Chennai.
- To study the sources of job stress for such professionals
- To study the consequences of job stress among such professionals.
- To study the stress management techniques adopted by organisations.

### 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study is descriptive in nature and has used a questionnaire as the research tool. The sample size is limited to 60 respondents employed with Tier II IT Companies operating in Chennai. The sampling technique has been convenience sampling.

### 6. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:

**Table 1 : Demographics of the Sample**

Age	Percentage	Family type	Percentage
Below 30	36.7	Joint Family	61.7
31– 40	30.0	Nuclear Family	38.3
Above 41	33.3	Work Experience	Percentage
Educational Level	Percentage	Below 5	21.7
Graduation	65.0	5 – 9	36.7
Post-Graduation	21.7	10 – 14	28.3
Any other (D.M.E, ITI)	13.3	Above 15	13.3

**Table 2 : Interpersonal Relations as a Source of Stress**

Level Of Stress	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Low	2	3.3
Normal	14	23.3
High	44	73.3

From the table, we can see that a majority of the respondents (73.3%) incur a high level of stress in their job on account of interpersonal relations whereas, more than one - fifth of the respondents (23.3%) incur normal level of stress and less than one - tenth of the respondents (3.3%) have low level of interpersonal stress.

Thus, we can infer that stress due to strained interpersonal relations is very high. One possible fact could be due to the poor superior-subordinate relationship at work.

**Table 3 : Working Conditions as a Source of Stress**

Level of stress	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Low	3	5.0
Normal	34	56.7
High	23	38.3

From the table, we can see that more than half of the respondents (56.7%) incur normal level of stress in their job due to working conditions whereas, less than one - fifth of the respondents (38.3%) incur high level of stress and less than one - tenth of the respondents (5%) have low physical condition stress level.

Thus, we can infer that physical working condition brings about only normal level of stress. This could be due to the fact that most of the IT organizations provide congenial working environment.

**Table 4 : Interest in Work as a Source of Stress**

Level Of Stress	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Low	2	3.3
Normal	8	13.3
High	50	83.3

From the table, we can see that more that majority of the respondents (83.3%) incur high level of stress in their job due to their interest in their work whereas, more than one - tenth of the respondents (13.3%) incur normal level of stress and less than one - tenth of the respondents (3.3%) have low job interest stress level. Thus, we can infer that stress is high among the respondents; maybe due to the fact that most of the respondents do feel a low sense of association towards their job.

**Table 5 : Total Level of Stress**

Level Of Stress	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Low	2	3.3
Normal	13	21.7
High	45	75.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the table, we can see that three - fourth of the respondents (75%) incur high level of stress in their job, whereas less than one - fifth of the respondents (21.7%) incur normal level of stress and less than one - tenth of the respondents (3.3%) have low level of stress.

Thus, we can infer that a majority of the respondents feel highly stressed on their job. The major reason for this high level of stress is primarily due stress caused by poor interpersonal relations at work.. Also, a high level of stress can be associated due to lack of interest in job.

**Table 6 : Consequences of Stress**

Statement	Always	Often	Some Times	Never	Total
Fear	15 (25.0%)	10 (16.7%)	17 (28.3%)	18 (30.0%)	60 (100.0%)
Excessive and Rapid swings in moods	4 (6.7%)	27 (45.0%)	25 (41.7%)	4 (6.7%)	60 (100.0%)
Worrying unreasonably about things of no concern	12 (20.0%)	25 (41.7%)	18 (30.0%)	5 (8.3%)	60 (100.0%)
Withdrawal	25 (41.7%)	16 (26.7%)	13 (21.7%)	6 (10.0%)	60 (100.0%)
Sleeping disorders/daydreaming	11 (18.3%)	15 (25.0%)	23 (38.3%)	11 (18.3%)	60 (100.0%)
Lack of Concentration	27 (45.0%)	21 (35.0%)	9 (15.0%)	3 (5.0%)	60 (100.0%)
Over eating or loss of appetite	9 (15.0%)	16 (26.7%)	23 (38.3%)	12 (20.0%)	60 (100.0%)
Palpitations	38 (63.3%)	12 (20.0%)	4 (6.7%)	6 (10.0%)	60 (100.0%)
Smoking/Alcohol abuse	6 (10.0%)	13 (21.7)	30 (50.0%)	11 (18.3%)	60 (100.0%)
Emotional Breakdown	40 (66.7%)	9 (15.0%)	6 (10.0%)	5 (8.3%)	60 (100.0%)

*Note : Figures in parentheses are percentages*

The above table indicates the various consequences of stress that commonly occurs in any work place situation. From the table, we can see that a little more than two - third of the respondents (66.7%) feel that emotional breakdown is a consequence of stress and the same two - third of the respondents (63.3%) feel that palpitations is a consequence of stress. Only one - tenth of the respondents (10%) feel that smoking/alcohol abuse is a consequence of stress. Less than half of the respondents (45%) always feel that lack of concentration is a consequence of stress. Less than two - fifth of the respondents (41.7%) always feel that withdrawal is a consequence of stress. More than one - third of the respondents (38.3%) often feel that worrying unreasonably about things of no concern is a consequence of stress. Thus we can infer that most of the respondents do feel that biological factors such as palpitations and emotional breakdown are major consequences of stress.

**Table 7 : Frequency of Initiatives taken by IT companies to Help Employees Relieve Stress**

Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Always	5	8.3
Often	27	45.0
Sometimes	25	41.7
Never	3	5.0

The above table indicates the respondents' response on whether their organisation has attempted to help employees relieve the job stress.

From the above table we can see that two-fifth of the respondents (45%) often agree to the statement, whereas another two-fifth of the respondents (41.7%) sometimes agree to the statement and the remaining less than one-tenth of the respondents (8.3%) and (5%) always and never agree to the statement respectively. Thus, we can infer that most of the respondents do feel that their organisation do take steps to evade their job stress as part of the welfare measures.

## 7. STATISTICAL TESTING:

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significance difference between age and total level of job related stress*

**Table 8 : Chi Square for the association between Age and Total Level of Stress**

Age	Total level of stress		Total	Chi Square Value	P Value
	Normal	High			
30 – 40 years	10 (25%)	30 (75%)	40 (100.0%)	3.841	.000*
Above 40 years	5 (25%)	15 (75%)	20 (100.0%)		
Total	15 (25%)	45 (75%)	60 (100.0%)		

From the above table we can infer that a majority of the respondents (75%) incur high level of stress at both age levels, whereas one - fourth of the respondents (25%) in the age group of between 30 - 40 years and another one - fourth of the respondents (25%) in the age group of above 40 years incur normal level of stress.

Since P value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1 percent level of significance. Hence concluded that there is association between age and total level of stress.

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significance difference between educational qualification and total level of job related stress*

**Table 8 : Chi Square for the association between Educational Qualification and Total Level of Stress**

Educational level	Total level of stress		Total	Chi Square Value	P Value
	Normal	High			
Graduation	10 (25.6%)	29 (75.4%)	39 (100.0%)	0.0304	.000*
Others	5 (23.8%)	16 (76.2%)	21 (100.0%)		
Total	15 (25%)	45 (75%)	60 (100.0%)		

For the purpose of calculation, the educational level of the respondents has been grouped as "Graduation" and "Others". From the above table we can infer that a majority of the respondents (75.4%) and (76.2%) incur high level of stress at both educational levels respectively, whereas little more than one - fourth the respondents (25.6%) at the

graduate level and another and a little less than one - fourth of the respondents (23.8%) who are Post Graduates, diploma holders incur normal level of stress.

Since P value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1 percent level of significance. Hence concluded that there is association between educational qualification and total level of stress.

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significance difference between type of family and total level of job related stress*

**Table 8 : Chi Square for the association between Type of Family and Total Level of Stress**

Type of family	Total level of stress		Total	Chi Square Value	P Value
	Normal	High			
Joint Family	8 (21.6%)	29 (78.4%)	37 (100.0%)	0.584	.000*
Nuclear Family	7 (30.4%)	16 (69.6%)	23 (100.0%)		
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b> <b>(25%)</b>	<b>45</b> <b>(75%)</b>	<b>60</b> <b>(100.0%)</b>		

From the above table we can see that a majority of the respondents (78.4%) who live in joint family incur high level of stress and more than two - third of the respondents (69.5%) who live in nuclear family incur high level of stress, whereas less than one - fifth of the respondents (21.6%) who live in joint family incur normal stress and more than one - fourth of the respondents (26%) who live in nuclear family incur normal level of stress.

Since P value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1 percent level of significance. Hence it can be concluded that there is association between type of family and total level of stress.

## 8. RESULTS OF THE STUDY:

### Findings

- From the study, it can be inferred that a great majority of the respondents (90%) are in the more productive age group, are well qualified and suited for the job, and 61.7% hail from joint family system of life with 65% having good working experience.
- It is found that for a majority of the respondents (73.3%), the interpersonal stress is very high; one possible fact is due to the poor superior- subordinate relationship in their job.
- It is identified that for more than half of the respondents (56.7%), working conditions lead to normal level of stress. This may be due to the fact that most of the organizations provide decent working conditions.
- It is found that stress is high among IT professionals maybe due to the fact that most of the respondents do feel a low sense of association towards their job.
- We can infer that a majority of the respondents feel highly stressed on their job. The major reason is due to the contribution of high interpersonal stress level in their job. Also, a high level of stress in job done further adds to high level of stress.
- It is found that most of the respondents feel that their organisation do take steps to evade their job stress.
- It is found that there is association between age and level of stress, educational qualification and level of stress and type of family and level of stress.

### Suggestions

- From the study it was clearly evident to the researcher that there needs to be a major change in the working style of today's organisations; especially from a personnel standpoint. This can be done by seeking active employee participation at all levels. This gives the employee a chance to let others know what he aspires to do and provides the employee with better chance of growth and development.
- There needs to be 'clear-cut' communication and disposition of vital information to the employees regarding their roles and responsibilities and organisational expectations in a broader context.
- 'Prevention is better than cure'. The same is applicable here. Organisations have to give more importance to 'Job Stress Prevention Mechanisms'. This has to be a continuous process that uses available data to refine or redirect proper intervention strategies. The organisation can also associate importance to 'Stress Management' and various coping strategies.
- It is evident from the study that the superior must understand his subordinates and provide them with amicable working conditions. This can reduce stress to a large extent at workplaces.
- Increased awareness regarding stress coping strategies both at the individual and also at the organisational level can also be given uttermost importance.

- Regular screening of health; both physical and mental, with special reference to stress at regular intervals can be conducted in organisations.
- Organisations can encourage better means of social interaction between its members. Social interaction between co-workers helps reduce stress in especially high stress jobs.
- Fear of rapid technological changes often has become a source of stress. There is a constant pressure among employees to keep up with the latest technology breakthroughs and improvisations. Organisations in this regard can help its employees by training them for future demands of the organisations and helping them to cope with the changes around them.
- Organisations need to associate importance to Employee Assistance Programmes, Industrial Social Work Programmes, and provision of personal Counselling services to both for the employee and his family members if necessary.
- It is necessary for the individuals to develop positive attitude in handling stressful situations in life by giving up negative traits such as fear, anger and revengeful attitudes, which actually germinate stress. They can revert to holistic relaxation and personal growth techniques such as meditation, breathing and exercises, to remodel the lifestyles.

## 9. CONCLUSION:

Work plays a powerful role in people's lives and exerts an important influence on their well-being. Although employment can be an exciting challenge for many individuals, it can also be a tremendous source of stress. Consequently, as work makes more and more demands on time and energy, individuals are increasingly exposed to both the positive and negative aspects of employment. The relationship between work and health (including mental healthy) may also contribute to career adjustment as well as to the productivity.

Individuals vary greatly in their capacity to endure stressful situations, and there is, undoubtedly, self-selection in the kinds of jobs and stressors that individuals choose. Because sources of stress may vary from worker to worker, providing a solution for one worker may create stress for another. This does not exclude organizations from recognizing job stress as a vital factor. Organizations must also make efforts in not only helping employees in managing stress, but should also take a proactive approach by devising suitable preventive steps.

Last but not the least, in today's competitive environment stress is here to stay. It is up to the organizations and their employees to devise suitable methods to cope with the challenges arising out of Job stress.

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