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## A STUDY ON MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYEES DURING REMOTE WORK IN THE IT INDUSTRY

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### ABSTRACT :

This research explores the mental health issues that IT professionals experience while working remotely. Remote work introduced flexibility but created problems such as stress, emotional exhaustion, work-life balance, and loneliness when the COVID-19 pandemic shifted work to remote working. A total of 78 IT employees participated, using a structured questionnaire, and simple random sampling was used for ensuring equitable representation. For studying the responses, the Chi-square test and Multiple Correlation were employed. The Chi-square test enabled the identification of the relationship between demographic variables—like age—and stress levels. Multiple correlation was applied to measure the strength of the relationship between aspects like work-life balance, team support, and employee stress. The analysis confirmed that employees with poor work-life balance and little support from teams showed higher stress levels. The research draws attention to the necessity of organizations applying measures like mental well-being schemes, proper communication frameworks, and flexible policies to address employees' mental welfare. This can alleviate emotional exhaustion and stress, leading to a healthier and more efficient remote working culture for IT experts.

**Key words :** Mental health, remote work, IT industry.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The IT sector has experienced a change towards remote work in recent years, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic. At first thought to be a temporary one, remote work is now a long-term working pattern for IT organizations in many parts of the world. This shift has brought new experiences to employee workplaces, providing flexibility and independence while also posing unprecedented challenges. As opposed to conventional office environments, remote work tends to result in isolation from social contacts, disturbed work habits, and longer working hours. These changes are most established in the IT sector, where workers are supposed to be highly productive while isolated, frequently being assigned multiple tasks.

Additionally, the line between private and professional life is increasingly changed in remote work environments, leading to mental weakness, emotional burnout, and stress. The lack of daily interaction with colleagues and managers can force workers feeling alone and unsupported. Most workers experience challenges in controlling time effectively and coordinating home responsibilities and work responsibilities. Gradually, this mismatch results in burnout, low job satisfaction, and lower productivity. Telecommuters also tend to have issues with the absence of routine setting, which tends to have a negative impact on concentration, enthusiasm, and psychological well-being.

In today's industry, where the way of work naturally involves continuous focus, tight timelines, and continuous upskilling, the psychological well-being effect of working remotely is especially accentuated. Remote workers, being in their initial stages, can also encounter a high learning curve when it comes to communication devices and digital collaboration platforms, further increasing their stress levels. Moreover, without the informal interactions and peer support available in the office setup, feelings of isolation and professional stagnation might kick in.

This study seeks to examine these emerging mental health issues among IT staff working remotely. It centers on discovering principal stressors like work-life imbalance and poor organizational support, lack of interaction with team members, etc. Through the analysis of employee responses and comprehension of their lived experiences, the study aims to offer beneficial insights. These will assist IT firms in developing effective strategies like wellness programs, supportive leadership practices, and flexible work arrangements for the betterment of mental well-being and creating a healthier, more sustainable remote work climate.

#### 1.1. OBJECTIVES

- To identify the main mental health issues faced by IT professionals working remotely.
- To examine the connections between employee traits and degrees of mental distress when working remotely.
- To analyse the impact that dimensions such as work-life balance and peer support have on mental health among IT professionals working remotely.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- *Allen et al. (2021)* conducted a study on remote work in the IT industry and found that employees reported increased levels of isolation and burnout. The research emphasized that reduced physical interaction and prolonged screen time contributed significantly to emotional exhaustion. The lack of informal peer conversations and social bonding were key factors in lowering morale. This study highlights the need for virtual social engagement and support systems. It also recommends regular check-ins and peer interactions to reduce feelings of disconnection. The findings are particularly relevant in long-term remote work settings.
- *Kumar & Rajan (2022)* observed a strong correlation between poor communication and emotional fatigue among remote IT workers. Their study revealed that the absence of clear communication channels led to confusion, repeated tasks, and lowered efficiency. Emotional fatigue was found to increase when employees lacked timely feedback or recognition. The authors suggest that open and transparent communication plays a vital role in maintaining employee well-being. Digital communication overload without clarity was also identified as a stressor. The study calls for structured communication protocols and frequent virtual team meets.
- *Rao (2021)* emphasized that organizational and team support significantly influences remote employees' morale and mental health. His findings showed that employees who felt supported by their managers and team members experienced less stress and higher job satisfaction. He also pointed out that recognition and appreciation in remote setups helped reduce feelings of neglect. The presence of a positive work culture and strong interpersonal relationships was linked with better performance. This literature highlights the value of emotional and professional support in remote IT settings. Regular feedback and mental health check-ins were also recommended.
- *Patel (2022)* reported that poor work-life balance was the primary contributor to stress among IT professionals during remote work. His research suggested that blurred boundaries between home and work led to longer working hours and reduced personal time. This imbalance created constant pressure and reduced productivity in the long term. Employees struggled to disconnect from work, which negatively affected their mental health. The study emphasized the need for setting clear working hours and encouraging time off. It also recommended that companies provide guidelines to help employees maintain this balance.
- *Sharma & Das (2023)* conducted a gender-based study and found that women in remote IT roles experienced significantly higher emotional exhaustion than men. This was mainly due to the dual burden of professional and domestic responsibilities. The study pointed out that women often managed household duties alongside work, which heightened stress. Lack of childcare support and cultural expectations were also contributing factors. The findings suggest the need for gender-sensitive remote work policies. Flexibility and wellness programs tailored for women were recommended to reduce burnout.
- *Singh & Mehta (2023)* explored the impact of virtual team collaboration on mental well-being in IT companies. Their study revealed that employees with frequent team interaction reported lower stress levels and higher motivation. Lack of collaboration tools or engagement led to a sense of professional stagnation. The authors stressed the importance of regular team-building activities and effective use of collaborative platforms. This literature suggests that improving virtual engagement can reduce feelings of isolation. Establishing a connected and interactive team culture was seen as essential for mental wellness.
- *Nair & Thomas (2021)* analyzed the psychological impact of remote work on newly joined IT employees. The study found that freshers faced anxiety due to lack of mentorship, unclear expectations, and limited support. Many felt lost in the system and were hesitant to communicate their concerns. The authors recommended structured onboarding programs and dedicated mentoring systems for remote settings. Their findings highlight the vulnerability of new employees in remote work environments. Providing continuous support and guidance was seen as a key factor in improving mental health.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Research Type: Descriptive research
- Population: IT employees working remotely
- Sample Size: 78 respondents
- Sampling Technique: Simple Random Sampling
- Tool: Structured questionnaire with Likert scale
- Analysis Tools: Chi-Square Test, Multiple Correlation
- Location: Chennai, Tamil Nadu

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 4.1 CHI-SQUARE TEST

#### HYPOTHESIS 1:

**Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>):** There is no association between age group and stress level.

**Alternate Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>):** There is a significant association between age group and stress level.

**Table No: 4.1.1 Age Group & Stress Level**

Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.84	6	0.698
Likelihood Ratio	3.63	6	
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.7	1	
No. of Valid Cases	78		

**Table Value (T.V)** (0.05, 6): 12.592

**Chi-Square Value = 3.84,**

$C.V < T.V$

**INFERENCE:** Since the p-value (.698) is greater than 0.05, we accept the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>). Hence, there is no significant association between age group and stress level. This means that stress affects employees across all age groups similarly in the IT industry.

#### 4.2 MULTIPLE CORRELATION

**Table No. 4.1.2 Multiple Correlation Results**

Variable	Correlation Coefficient
Stress and Work-Life Balance (Y,X <sub>1</sub> )	-0.66
Stress and Team Support (Y,X <sub>2</sub> )	-0.52
Work-Life Balance and Team Support (X <sub>1</sub> ,X <sub>2</sub> )	0.48
Multiple Correlation Coefficient ( $R_{Y.X_1X_2}$ )	0.699

#### INTERPRETATION:

The multiple correlation coefficient ( $R = 0.699$ ) is strong, indicating that **better team support** and **work-life balance** significantly reduce **stress levels**.

#### RESULT:

There is a significant combined influence of work-life balance and team support on employee stress levels.

#### INFERENCE:

Since the multiple correlation is strong, it clearly shows that focusing on enhancing work-life balance and team support can effectively reduce employee stress in remote work settings.

## 5. FINDINGS

1. The age group and stress level were not strongly associated.
2. Team support and work-life balance are highly related to stress levels.
3. Workers with poor balance and poor team communication reported increased stress.
4. Several workers feel burnout, demotivation, and loneliness while working remotely.
5. Professional pressure still remains irrespective of job or position within the IT industry.

## 6. SUGGESTIONS

1. Provide online mental health counseling for feeling better.
2. Encourage virtual team bonding activities to improve support with the team members.
3. Introduce flexible hours and strict work-life boundaries.
4. Conduct quarterly surveys to assess mental health needs.
5. Train managers in emotional intelligence and remote team engagement

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## 7. CONCLUSION

The study shows that mental health challenges such as stress and burnout are common among IT professionals working remotely. Though age does not influence stress levels, lack of work-life balance and poor team support are key contributors. The multiple correlation analysis confirmed their strong impact on stress. IT industry must recognize this issue and provide emotional, social, and policy support to employees to build a mentally healthy remote work environment.

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