

**UNPLUGGING FROM STRESS: WORK-LIFE BALANCE CHALLENGES IN
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to learn how IT workers' stress levels impact their work-life balance. It delves into the specific sources of stress that IT personnel in Hyderabad face, including both organizational and personal factors. With an emphasis on OCS, PCS, and the deployment of remedial measures to relieve stress (FRMRS), the study framework incorporates several studies on the job performance of IT professionals. These factors all impact the overall quality of work life. Secondary data is supplemented with primary data in this research. Standardized questionnaires were sent out to IT staff members in order to collect primary data, while scholarly articles, websites, and books were used to compile secondary data. Utilizing a convenience sample strategy, a descriptive and exploratory research approach was chosen. Using IBM SPSS Version 28.0, 114 replies were examined in total. “Nearly half of those who took the survey were agnostic about the impact of stress on their lives. Particularly for female workers, problems at home ranked high on the list of stressors. All workers need a work-life balance and methods to reduce stress, according to the results. In today's fast-paced business world, it's crucial for employers and workers to work together to reduce stress and enhance the work-life balance. In tech-driven businesses in particular, where stress may have a detrimental effect on performance, addressing stress-related problems is critical for company success. Results show that IT staff are only somewhat effective, with room for development. Improved quality of life at work in IT companies is a direct result of the helpful insights offered by this study on how to deal with stress.

Keywords: Human resource management, Information technology, Quality of work life, Stress, Work performance, IT Employees.

INTRODUCTION:

In the digital age, Information Technology (IT) has become the backbone of global connectivity, business operations, and innovation. As the industry advances rapidly, so do the demands placed on IT professionals. While technology offers immense convenience and productivity, it also brings with it an unrelenting pace, heightened expectations, and a culture of constant availability. These elements, although crucial for progress, have posed significant challenges to achieving a healthy work-life balance for those working in the sector. The modern IT workplace is defined by long hours, tight deadlines, on-call duties, and the expectation of being reachable around the clock. As organizations pursue competitive advantage through digital transformation, employees are often required to stretch their limits, blurring the line between their professional and personal lives. This “always-on” mentality, driven by instant communication tools and remote access technologies, has contributed to increased stress levels, emotional fatigue, and ultimately, burnout among IT personnel. Work-life balance is a vital component of overall well-being. It involves creating a harmonious relationship between one's job responsibilities and personal interests, including family time, leisure, and self-care. In the context of IT, where the boundaries of work are less defined due to remote work and globalization, maintaining this balance becomes particularly challenging. The pressure to meet constant demands, troubleshoot systems at odd hours, or respond to client needs across different time zones leaves little room for recuperation. Stress in the IT profession is not merely a byproduct of a busy schedule; it is often embedded into the very fabric of the industry. Many roles within IT—such as software development, cybersecurity, systems analysis, and network administration—require intense concentration, attention to detail, and rapid problem-solving. The frequent need to adapt to emerging technologies and learn new skills adds to the cognitive and emotional burden on employees. Moreover, the fear of falling behind in such a fast-moving field fuels a cycle of overwork and self-imposed pressure. One major factor contributing to poor work-life balance in IT is the prevalence of unrealistic workload expectations. Projects are often under-resourced or time-constrained, compelling workers to put in extra hours to meet deliverables. In many cases, overtime becomes normalized, and employees are judged based on their willingness to go beyond standard working hours. This culture of overachievement, while sometimes glorified, erodes mental health and reduces job satisfaction over time. Another contributing factor is the shift toward remote and hybrid work models, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. While remote work offers flexibility, it also blurs spatial and psychological boundaries between home and office. Without a clear divide, many professionals struggle to “switch off” from work, resulting in a continuous cycle of digital engagement. Emails, instant messages, and project updates often infiltrate personal time, creating a sense of perpetual obligation and reducing the quality of rest and recreation. Furthermore, IT teams that support critical infrastructure or global operations often face unpredictable schedules and night shifts. The need for 24/7 support in sectors like healthcare, finance, or e-commerce adds another layer of complexity to managing time effectively. For such professionals, maintaining a consistent routine or dedicating time to personal relationships becomes a struggle. Beyond individual consequences, the lack of work-life balance can negatively impact organizations. Stressed and overworked

employees are more likely to make errors, experience reduced creativity, and suffer from low morale. High turnover rates and increased absenteeism are common in environments where employee well-being is neglected. In contrast, companies that prioritize mental health, offer flexibility, and respect personal time report higher levels of employee engagement and performance. The issue of unplugging from stress, therefore, is not just a personal challenge but a systemic one. It calls for a shift in organizational culture and leadership practices. Employers must recognize the human limitations of their workforce and foster an environment that values rest, encourages boundaries, and supports time off. Offering wellness programs, flexible scheduling, regular breaks, and resources for mental health can significantly alleviate the stress burden. At the individual level, IT professionals can adopt strategies to protect their time and mental well-being. These include setting clear boundaries, practicing time management, engaging in physical activity, and disconnecting from devices after working hours. However, the responsibility cannot rest on individuals alone. Structural changes and supportive leadership are essential for long-term sustainability. In summary, the information technology industry is both a driver of progress and a contributor to unique workplace stressors. The high demands, technological intensity, and culture of constant connectivity create a landscape where unplugging becomes increasingly difficult. To address these challenges, a balanced approach is required—one that involves both organizational reforms and personal resilience. As the industry continues to evolve, integrating well-being into its core values will be critical in ensuring a healthier, more sustainable future for IT professionals.

REASON FOR STRESS AT THE WORKPLACE:

- Low salary
- High workload
- Lack of chance for development and improvement
- idealistic work opportunity
- work safety
- Lack of contribution in management at workplace
- Work atmosphere.

Quality of Work Life:-

The term "quality of work life" (QWL) refers to employees' satisfaction with their personal and professional requirements due to engaging in work activities and attaining organizational objectives. According to Louis and Smith's (1990) research, QWL is crucial for lowering staff turnover and improving employee well-being, which influence the services provided. The behavioral approach to management that resulted from the Hawthorne studies (1924–1933), carried out by El-ton Mayo and F.J. Roethlisberger, is where the idea of Quality Work Life (QWL) first gained traction. These studies served as a turning point in shifting the emphasis from productivity to the individuals behind it.

A good standard of quality work life is required for a business to continue attracting and retaining personnel. As of now, several researchers have offered various definitions of QWL. "Satisfying an

employee's needs via the resources, activities, and outcomes that arise from involvement in the workplace" is the primary definition of QWL. **Rethinamand Ismail(2014)** QWL is a multi-dimensional construct comprising a variety of interrelated aspects, according to a study of several studies on its definitions and conceptions. **(Normala)** Suggests that, among other things, higher income, employment stability, improved incentive systems, growth opportunities, and participatory groups are the major QWL components. The extent to which people can meet their basic requirements while working for a company is called QWL

Reviews related to Stress management as component on Quality of Work Life (QWL) Saraji & Dargahi (2006) When the main factors influencing the quality of work life (QWL) of TUMS hospital employees were analyzed, it was discovered that inadequate stress management was a significant factor in the low level of QWL among hospital employees.

Chirayath (2007) researched how Stress affects workers' quality of life and productivity among airport employees. According to empirical data, the Majority of employees experienced occupational Stress, which in turn impacted their QWL.

Ongori and Evans (2008) researched the level of workplace stress experienced by employees in Botswana's public sector organizations. They discovered that Stress at work has various effects on employees, often resulting in low QWL in most firms.

Shahzad et al. (2011) studied customer service employees in Pakistan to determine the link between job stress and quality of work life (QWL), and it was shown to near is a unhelpful association among work stress levels plus QWL.

Kumar (2012) When the causes of the poor QWL of BPO employees were examined, it was shown that job stress brought on by overwork was a significant factor. This finding should be corrected to prevent employee turnover.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

The concept of work-life balance has been extensively explored in organizational and psychological studies over the past few decades, especially in relation to high-pressure industries such as Information Technology (IT). The literature highlights a complex interplay between job demands, personal well-being, organizational support, and evolving work patterns driven by technology. **Greenhaus and Beutell (1985)** introduced one of the earliest comprehensive models of work-life conflict, identifying time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflicts. Their work laid the foundation for examining how competing role demands contribute to employee stress, particularly in time-sensitive fields like IT. In the IT sector, **work-related stress is often associated with long hours, job insecurity, and constant technological change**, as noted by Tarafdar et al. (2007), who introduced the term "technostress." Their research emphasized how the very tools meant to enhance productivity could become sources of anxiety, especially when workers are required to remain constantly connected to their devices. **Grover (2011)** further explored technostress by categorizing key stressors into techno-overload, techno-invasion, techno-complexity, techno-insecurity, and techno-uncertainty. These categories are highly relevant to IT professionals, who must navigate frequent updates, complex systems, and the ever-present need to

upgrade their skill sets. Another critical perspective comes from the **Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model** by Demerouti et al. (2001), which suggests that job demands such as workload and emotional strain can lead to burnout unless counterbalanced by adequate resources, like autonomy and organizational support. This model has been applied in numerous studies involving IT employees to assess how lack of recovery time contributes to physical and psychological exhaustion. **Schieman, Glavin, and Milkie (2009)** observed that increased digital engagement leads to work spilling over into home life, especially for knowledge workers. Their findings show that high connectivity may erode boundaries between personal and professional domains, reinforcing the “always-on” culture prevalent in tech industries. **Dr.Naveen Prasadula (2024)** conducted a meta-analysis on flexible work arrangements and concluded that such practices can reduce work-family conflict and improve job satisfaction. However, in IT, flexible work often turns into extended work due to the nature of tasks and global collaboration, limiting the intended benefits of flexibility. In contrast, **Chesley (2014)** found that remote work could both positively and negatively affect work-life balance. While it allows for location independence and schedule autonomy, it also increases expectations of constant availability, particularly in IT roles where troubleshooting or system monitoring is required outside typical work hours. A major consequence of poor work-life balance—has been widely studied in tech professions. **Maslach and Leiter (1997)** describe burnout as a state of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy. IT professionals are especially vulnerable due to project-based work cycles and high cognitive demands.

Research by **Brough et al. (2005)** demonstrated that support from supervisors and peers significantly reduces the impact of stress in high-intensity jobs. In tech environments, where team collaboration is crucial, social support can act as a buffer against work overload and emotional strain. **Kossek, (2012)** introduced the idea of boundary management styles—how individuals choose to segment or integrate work and personal life. Their study highlighted that IT professionals who establish clear boundaries tend to experience less stress and higher satisfaction. The literature also emphasizes the **gender dimension** of work-life balance. **Morris (2000)** pointed out that women in tech often face dual burdens of meeting organizational expectations and fulfilling familial roles. This intersection makes unplugging from work even more difficult for female IT professionals, leading to unique stress experiences. More recent studies, such as that by **Mauno et al. (2016)**, indicate that psychological detachment from work during non-work hours is essential for recovery. Unfortunately, many IT workers struggle with this due to the nature of their responsibilities, leading to prolonged cognitive engagement even after logging off. Emerging research is also exploring the **impact of organizational culture and leadership** on work-life integration. **Kelliher (2010)** found that companies promoting output-based performance over time-based expectations help employees feel more autonomous, thus improving their work-life harmony. Digital wellbeing frameworks, as proposed by scholars like **Mark (2015)**, suggest using digital tools to promote mindful use of technology, scheduling breaks, and encouraging team norms that protect personal time. However, the adoption of such frameworks is still limited in high-demand IT environments. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic has added new dimensions to the

literature, with studies such as those by **Straub (2020)** showing that remote work surged dramatically and affected work-life boundaries even more. While some employees benefited from reduced commute times, many reported increased work hours and feelings of social isolation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. Identify and under underlying dimension of the organization causes of Stress (OCS) and personal causes of stress (PCS) variables among IT Employees in Hyderabad city.
2. To study the influence of personal profiles, Factors of Organizational Causes of Stress (OCS), personal causes of Stress (PCS), and Fulfillment of Remedial measures to reduce Stress (FRMRS) on the QWL Dimensions
3. Determine level of importance on reducing stress levels in the Organisations.

NEED OF THE STUDY: One of the industries that investors in India most frequently choose is information technology. Its effects have been both favorable and unfavorable. Long work hours, few vacation days, less time spent with family, having to fulfill deadlines quickly—these things have all come with it. One such difficulty, whether it be personal or professional, is Stress. There are two realities about Stress that cannot be denied. People become ill due to Stress at work, first and foremost. Second, stress management entails considerable expenses for any firm. They include the reduction in productivity and the loss of time. This strategy drastically raises employee absenteeism and turnover rates.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: The nature of the current study is exploratory and descriptive. The study's preliminary information was gathered using a standardized questionnaire given to IT employees at HCL, Accenture, Wipro, TCS, Tech Mahindra, and other companies in Hyderabad. Internet, periodicals, and magazines are used to get secondary data. HCL, Accenture, Wipro, TCS, and Tech Mahindra were the five organizations we considered for the study. In this study, convenience sampling was employed. 114 samples in total were obtained using the questionnaire. IBM SPSS Version 28.0 was used to evaluate the test data.

DATA INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Demography profile

Table 1 Demography Profile of Information Technology Employees

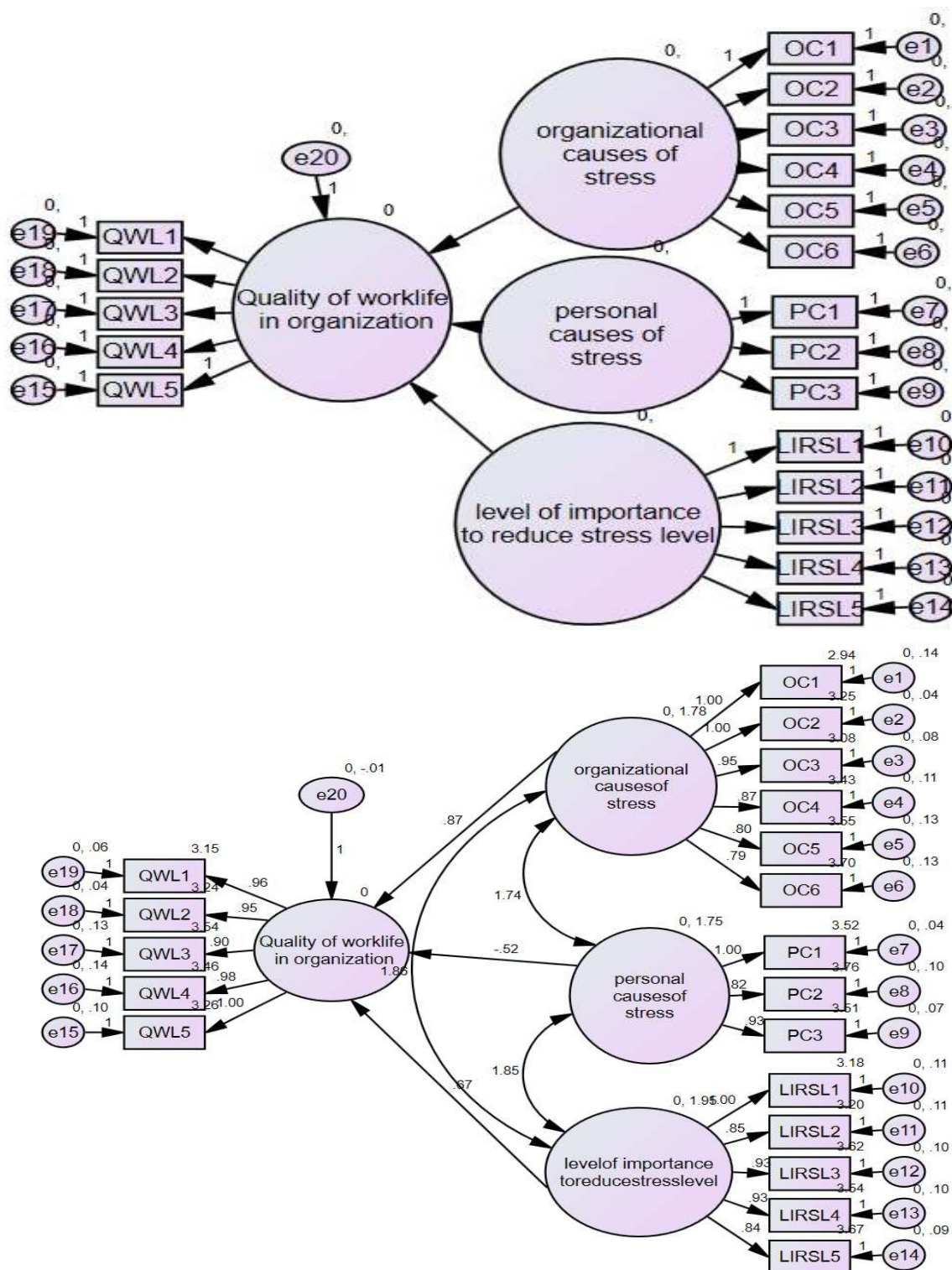
MEASURABLE VARIABLE	ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age	Between 20 to 30 years	20	17.5%
	Between 31 to 40 years	27	23.7%
	Between 41 to 50 Years	31	27.2%
	Above 51 years	36	31.6%
	Total	114	100%
Marital status	Unmarried	68	59.6%

	Married	46	40.4
	Total	114	100%
Educational Qualification	Diploma	19	16.7%
	Under Graduate	29	25.4%
	Post gradate	38	33.3%
	Professional course	28	24.6%
	Total	114	100%
Income	Below Rs 20000	38	33.3%
	Rs 20001 to 40000	25	21.9%
	Rs 40001 to 60000	27	23.7%
	Above 60001	24	21.1%
	Total	114	100%
No.of.Work Experience	0-4 years	33	28.9%
	4-8 years	32	28.1%
	8-12 years	27	23.7%
	Above 12 years	22	19.3%
	Total	114	100%
Nature of family	Nuclear family	65	57.0%
	Joint family	49	43.0
	Total	114	100%
Level of Employment	Low Level	42	36.8%
	Middle Level	47	41.2%
	Higher Level	25	21.9%
	Total	114	100%

Confirmatory Factor Analysis:

As the proposed one-factor solution, the model was specified with only one latent factor (QWL). The estimate model was maximum likelihood, using standardized coefficients. To also test the theoretical foundation of QWL, we perform CFA with the Likert scale, strongly agree, agree, disagree, neutral, strongly disagree. We also tested a two-factor model and perform CFA by this structure. Figure1&2 explain every one the attempt model. Table: 2 shows the coefficients of the hypothesized relationship, the p values, the standard error, and 95% confidence intervals for tested models. Following estimate the models, the goodness of fit statistics be obtain, as described in the "Materials and Methods" section above. As can be seen in Table 3. The model showed a perfect fit with RMSEA range among 0.181 and 0.167. Also, CFI and TLI, which should preferably be above 0.95 (Hooper et al., 2008) remain under this value for all tested models.

MODEL: 1



MODEL: 2

Confirmatory factor analysis was then performed using three different models: one-factor, two-

factor, and Goodness-of-fit statistics were obtained for all models showed overall good fit, with RMSEA never going below less than 0.06 and CFI and TLI remaining relatively low, so the model was fit.

Table: 2 All models' standardized coefficients and associated data.

Particulars	Item	Coefficient Model-1	Coefficient Model-2	Standard error Model-1	Standard error Model-2	p-value model-1	p-value model-2	5%CI model-1	5%CI model-2
Organisational causes of stress (OC)	Job security(OC1)	0.73	0.75	0.02	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.76; 0.82	0.75; 0.84
	Excessive workload(OC2)	0.79	0.81	0.02	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.79; 0.85	0.79; 0.87
	Unsafe working environment(OC3)	0.9	0.91	0.02	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.90; 0.94	0.91; 0.94
	Lack of training and development(OC4)	0.73	0.75	0.01	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.76; 0.82	0.75; 0.84
	Lack of participation in Decision making(OC5)	0.71	0.72	0.01	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.73; 0.80	0.72; 0.81
	Lack of career development opportunities(OC6)	0.62	0.63	0.01	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.65; 0.73	0.63; 0.74
Personal Causes of Stress (PC)	Pressure to meet deadlines(PC1)	0.9	0.91	0.01	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.93; 0.95	0.94; 0.94
	Feeling of Inequality(PC2)	0.62	0.64	0.03	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.81; 0.86	0.86; 0.90

	Lack of Time management(PC3)	0.73	0.74	0.01	0.01	<0.001	<0.001	0.72; 0.81	0.70; 0.78
level of importance to reduce the stress level in the organization	Timely Reaction to the Grievance (LIRSI1)	0.83	0.84	0.02	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.79; 0.87	0.80; 0.89
(LIRSI)	Ensuring Job security(LIRSI2)	0.69	0.7	0.01	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.65; 0.73	0.66; 0.75
	Providing a Healthy and safe working environment (LIRSI3)	0.84	0.85	0.01	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.89; 0.87	0.79; 0.89
	Providing fair and good salary/ compensation (LIRSI4)	0.6	0.61	0.02	0.03	<0.001	<0.001	0.65; 0.73	0.65; 0.74
	Flexible work timings(LIRSI4)	0.74	0.75	0.03	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.73; 0.79	0.72; 0.80
	Timely Reaction to Grievance (LIRSI5)	0.87	0.9	0.01	0.01	<0.001	<0.001	0.85; 0.89	0.86; 0.92
	Job recognitions(QWL1)	0.91	0.92	0.02	0.01	<0.001	<0.001	0.93; 0.94	0.94; 0.96
	Resources are adequate (QWL2)	0.82	0.84	0.02	0.03	<0.001	<0.001	0.79; 0.85	0.79; 0.85
	Transport								

quality of facilities are comfortable and convenient (QWL3) worklife in an organisation (QWL) Innovation and creativity in encouraged (QWL4) Management Policies are flexible (QWL5)	0.84	0.86	0.03	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.810 .86	0.88; 0.89
	0.89	0.91	0.03	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.910 .94	0.95; 0.94
	0.97	0.98	0.03	0.02	<0.001	<0.001	0.910 .94	0.87; 0.92

Table:3 Goodness-of-fit statistics for all models.

Fit statistic	Suggested value	One factor model	Two-factor model
Chi2(df)	Greater than 0.01	0.075	0.081
P-value	Greater than 0.05	0.803	0.808
G.F.Index	Greater than 0.9	0.991	0.992
AGF Index	Greater than 0.9	0.995	0.999
CF Index	Greater than 0.9	0.993	0.994
RMSEA	Less than 0.06	<0.001	<0.001

Note:1. * At a 5% level, this indicates significance

MODEL: 1 The determined P-value is 0.803, more significant than 0.05, indicating a perfect fit, according to the preceding table. It is an excellent fit because the goodness of fit index (GFI) value (0.991) and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) value (0.995) are both larger than 0.9. The determined comparative fit index (CFI) value (0.993) indicates a perfect match, and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) value is less than 0.001, indicating that the model is a perfectly fit. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

MODEL: 2 The determined P-value is 0.808, more significant than 0.05, indicating a perfect fit, according to the preceding table. It is an excellent fit because the goodness of fit index (GFI) value (0.992) and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) value (0.999) are both larger than 0.9. The determined comparative fit index (CFI) value (0.993) indicates a perfect match, and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) value is less than 0.001, indicating that the model is a perfect fit. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

As a result, the present study has strengths as well as weaknesses. The relative sample size of approximately 116 Employees made it possible to randomly divide the group into half so that both an exploratory and a CFA could be undertaken. As a result, most employees are facing Stress at

the workplace. So the employees are faced with personal cause stress, Organisation cause Stress. If the Organisation provides a good QWL at the workplace, it reduces the stress level of employees. Based on the response, the Employees are affected by these causes in QWL. So the company can give importance to the employee to reduce Stress at the workplace.

Significant factors toward Stress on quality of work life Table: 4

H03 There is no significant difference among the mean ranks of factors stress on the quality of work life

Friedman test for significant difference among mean ranks of factors toward Stress on quality of work life

factors toward Stress on quality of work life	Mean Rank	Chi-square value	P-value
organizational causes of Stress	4.00	323.422	0.001**
Personal Causes of Stress	3.03		
level of importance to reduce stress level	2.64		
quality of work life in Organisation	2.34		

Note: 1. **at a 1% level, this indicates significance

The null hypothesis is rejected at 5% significance level since the p-value is less than 0.005. As a result, there is a considerable variation in the mean rank of gender when it comes to QWL among IT employees. Most of the Women employees feel they want better QWL in Organisation. The highest mean of the Friedman test was Organisational cause of Stress is the effect of Employees.

FINDINGS:

1. The Majority (27.2%) of the respondents are from the Age of Between 41 to 50 Years
2. The Majority (43%) of the respondents are neutral women employees who have family problems
3. Every person who works should have a healthy work-life balance and be free of Stress.
4. It is essential to prevent the causes of poor work-life balance and occupational Stress.
5. In the current world, the employee and the employer must cooperate to benefit from every aspect.
6. Employees' requirements should be adequately considered and met for the successful operation of the business."

CONCLUSION:

The primary objective of the study was to examine the influence of stress on employees' quality of work life and their performance. Furthermore, the research demonstrated a positive and strong

correlation between employee work performance, which directly impacts organizational performance, and stress levels affecting the quality of work life. This suggests that effective management of quality work life through appropriate policies and systems can contribute to the sustainability of a company and help mitigate attrition rates. A contented employee tends to exhibit lower turnover rates, exercise sound judgment, and actively contribute to the achievement of the company's objectives. Stress is an inevitable aspect of human existence, adding a dynamic dimension to life experiences. Regardless of the pressures inherent in their roles, every employee is bound to encounter stress. While the adverse effects of stress can be mitigated, stress itself, whether positive or negative, remains an intrinsic part of individual experiences. Positive stress is indispensable for enhancing individuals' efficiency, improving performance, and augmenting overall productivity within a firm. The concept of Quality of Work Life (QWL) assumes paramount importance in contemporary settings, as individual personalities directly influence their quality of work life, thereby affecting job stress levels. Consequently, it becomes incumbent upon organizations to prioritize the well-being of their employees and bolster their quality of life in the workplace, thereby curbing attrition rates, reducing absenteeism, and mitigating declines in worker productivity. The researcher provided pertinent recommendations aimed at achieving these objectives. Organizations that concentrate on mitigating employee stress levels stand to enhance overall productivity. Given the profound impact of stress on all employees, companies can facilitate a less stressful work environment by enhancing the quality of the workplace ambiance and culture.

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