

WORKPLACE STRESS: ASSESSING ITS INFLUENCE ON SLEEP PATTERNS, PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH, AND COGNITIVE PERFORMANCE AMONG CORPORATE EMPLOYEES

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by

Jyotsna

Under the Supervision and Guidance of

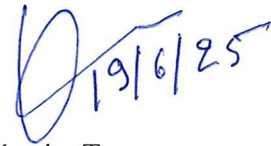
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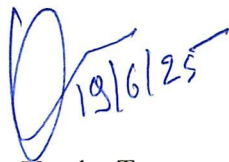
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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Dr. Varsha Tanu', with the date '19/6/25' written below it.

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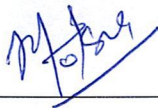
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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this dissertation titled **“WORKPLACE STRESS: ASSESSING ITS INFLUENCE ON SLEEP PATTERNS, PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND COGNITIVE PERFORMANCE AMONG CORPORATE EMPLOYEES”** is the bona fide record of my original research work. I declare that it has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been duly acknowledged in the text.



Jyotsna

Date: 19/6/25

Abstract

1. Title:

Workplace Stress: Assessing Its Influence on Sleep Patterns, Psychological Health, and Cognitive Performance Among Corporate Employees

2. Author Name:

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3. Advisory Name:

Dr. Varsha Tanu

4. Keywords:

Workplace stress, sleep quality, mental health, cognitive function, emotional exhaustion, burnout, productivity, employee performance, occupational health

5. Background:

In today's highly demanding work environments, stress has become an increasingly common experience for employees across sectors. The effects of chronic workplace stress go far beyond temporary discomfort; it can disturb sleep, impair mental well-being, reduce focus, and ultimately affect job performance. With growing evidence that poor sleep and emotional burnout are linked to reduced cognitive ability, this study explores how these interrelated challenges impact the modern workforce.

6. Objective:

This study aims to examine the impact of workplace stress on three core areas:

1. Sleep patterns and quality
2. Psychological and emotional health
3. Cognitive performance, including focus, memory, and decision-making.

Additionally, it investigates how demographic factors such as gender, age, and employment sector may influence these outcomes.

7. Methodology:

A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted using an online structured questionnaire. Participants included 115 full-time employees from diverse sectors across

India. The study tool integrated validated scales such as the BJSQ, PSQI, DASS-21, CFQ, and WLQ. Sampling was done through purposive and convenience techniques via digital platforms. Data was collected anonymously over a three-month period to assess the relationships between stress, sleep, psychological state, and cognitive performance.

8.Results:

Findings indicate that over 58% of participants reported workload-related stress, while more than 67% experienced emotional and mental exhaustion by the end of the workday. Around half of the respondents reported difficulty focusing, memory issues, and reduced creative thinking when under stress. A significant proportion also linked stress to poor sleep quality, behavioral changes, and strained relationships, highlighting the widespread and interconnected impact of occupational stress.

9.Conclusion:

The study confirms that workplace stress is a multifaceted issue with clear consequences on sleep, mental well-being, and cognitive function. Young employees, especially those in the private sector, appear particularly affected. These findings call for urgent attention from organizations to prioritize employee well-being through practical strategies such as balanced workloads, mental health programs, supportive leadership, and sleep hygiene awareness. Creating healthier work environments is not only a moral imperative but also essential for long-term productivity and organizational success.

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I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to **IIHMR University** for providing me with the opportunity and resources to pursue this study. The academic environment, access to scholarly materials, and encouragement from the faculty have played a significant role in the successful completion of my dissertation.

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Sincerely

Jyotsna

Place - Jaipur

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List of abbreviations

S.NO	ABBREVIATIONS	FULL FORM
1.	PSQI	Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index
2.	BJSQ	Brief Job Stress Questionnaire
3.	DASS-21	Depression Anxiety Stress Scales-21
4.	CFQ	Cognitive Failure Questionnaire
5.	WLQ	Work Limitation Questionnaire
6.	SMEs	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
7.	COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
8.	MBI -GS	Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey
9.	MHC-SF	Mental Health Continuum – Short Form
10.	MHI-5	Mental Health Inventory – 5 item version
11.	LOT-R	Life Orientation Test – Revised
12.	JD-R	Job Demands–Resources
13.	HSE	Health and Safety Executive

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

One major practical issue in today's workplaces is stress^[1]. The negative consequences that arise when demands from a job surpass a person's talents, resources, or needs are known as occupational stress, job anxiety, workplace anxiety, or stress caused by employment, which negatively impact their psyche and cognitive function^[2]. Women are far more likely to be affected than men of the same age by work-related stress, illustrating the gender-specific nature of stress. High workloads, inadequate leadership practices, and an inability to strike a healthy work-life balance are cited by employees as their primary causes of stress^[1]. The term "stress" is used often these days, whether in newspapers, on social media, or in casual discussions. However, what is stress exactly? Stress is simply the sensation of being overpowered, nervous, or uneasy when anything in our environment, whether positive or negative, throws off our normal equilibrium, either mentally or physically. It's how our body and mind react to pressure, whether it comes from personal struggles, looming deadlines, or even exciting developments that force us to go outside of our comfort zone.

Types of stress

Stress can be divided into two categories based on how it affects a person's body, mind, and performance:

1. Eu-stress: Eu-stress is just an acceptable level of stress that an individual can handle; it can inspire citizens to take on new activities, ignite hidden talents and abilities, and create a passion for work. Such well-quantified stress can lead to success.
2. Distress: This type of stress is an excessive amount of stress that is negative for the person; it can have negative effects on the person's body and mind, leading to conditions like depression and cardiovascular disease.

Reasons for workplace stress

Depending on where they originate, stressors may be categorized into two groups. Majorly are:

Internal causes: These include a person's mindset, thought process, etc. Both factors originate within and contribute to stress. These internal reasons stem from a person's viewpoint. A person may feel threatened by

someone or something and become anxious even if there is no threat in their immediate environment.

External cause of workplace stress: Stress at work often doesn't come from within us it's shaped by what's happening around us. Several external factors in the workplace can affect how someone performs and feels on the job:

1. **Job Insecurity:** Constantly worrying about losing your job can be emotionally draining. When employees feel their position isn't stable, that fear can chip away at their confidence and motivation, often leading to a drop in the quality of their work.
2. **Irregular Working Hours:** Working odd or extended hours can throw off the body's natural rhythm. It disrupts sleep, hampers recovery time, and over time, contributes to physical and mental stress.
3. **Lack of Control Over One's Work:** When employees have little say in how they do their jobs or make decisions, they can start to feel powerless. Trying to meet unrealistic expectations set by others without having any control can quickly lead to frustration and burnout.
4. **Authoritarian Management Style:** A boss who micromanages or doesn't allow any room for employee input can create a stressful atmosphere. When decisions are always top-down and workers are left without autonomy, it builds pressure, resentment, and disengagement.
5. **Work Overload or Underload:** Having too much on your plate with tight deadlines can make anyone feel overwhelmed. But having too little to do can also cause stress. In such cases, employees may begin to feel undervalued, bored, or question their own worth and capabilities.
6. **Forced Behavioral Adjustments:** Sometimes, employees are asked to behave in ways that don't feel authentic to them, whether it's putting on a happy face during tough times or adapting to rigid corporate norms. These forced changes can feel unnatural and exhausting, becoming a hidden source of stress over time^[3].

For sufficient-quality job performance in these environments, personnel must possess high technical expertise and understanding^[4]. Stressors and their effects are both examined in research on issues linked to occupational stress. Sleep quality is one of the

variables that seems to interact with work stress. In terms of human health, sleep is essential. Poor sleep is linked to a number of physical health conditions, including metabolic syndrome, obesity, and cardiovascular difficulties. Psychological variables, such as sadness, low mood, increased aggressiveness, and minor cognitive impairment, are also associated with poor sleep quality. However, sleep issues are common among a variety of demographics, including students, drivers, nurses, and industrial workers.

The Relation between Good Sleep Quality and Stress in the Workplace

Globally, poor sleep quality and occupational stress are major issues. According to a 2022 study, 44% of participants globally stated that they felt a lot of stress at work every single day. With 55% of people reporting work stress, Eastern Asia was the region with the highest job-related stress levels, followed by North America with 50%. Over half of the younger generation and Generation Z said that work stress was harming their sleep worldwide. Most of the included examinations showed a consistent adverse relationship between sleep quality and job-related stress^[2]. In many instances, insufficient sleep and high levels of stress caused by work coexisted. Just three studies involving Italian nurses^[5], Finland's retiree population, and German firemen^[6], according to cross-sectional surveys and longitudinal research, show no meaningful correlation between work-related stress and sleep quality. Considering the notion of "job stress" is wide and encompasses a variety of events in an individual's workplace, researchers have dubbed these factors "stressors," and cross-sectional studies have shown a correlation between these stressors and poor sleep quality.

Task-related stressors: High job demands (e.g., workload, time pressure) have been linked in several studies to poor sleep. When distinguishing between distinctive indicators of poor sleep, researchers discovered that workers with high job demands had issues falling asleep and staying asleep.

Working time Stressors related to working time can lead to sleep issues. A substantial body of research indicates that shift work is linked to poor sleep, but results are mixed when it comes to long work hours and overtime. On the one hand, some studies show a positive correlation between these factors and poor sleep quality.

Traumatic stressor: difficulties with sleep are linked to stressful situations at work.

While a variety of factors may affect the length and quality of sleep, work stress may be a major contributor to the within-person variability in sleep over time.

The view of the consequences of stress on an individual has changed. Stress is not necessarily ineffective, and, if beneficial, may become one of the most essential contributors in enhancing productivity inside a company. Negative stress may lead to several physical and mental health issues in workers, as well as annoyance, hurriedness, and job discontent. The organization may become complacent due to the absence of activity.

Because of this, stress has several dimensions, and its effects vary depending on whether workers view it as a problem or a solution. It implies that sleep deprivation, especially when faced with a heavy job and difficulties, is likely to deplete one's cognitive, emotional, and motoric personal resources, affecting day-to-day work performance (and vice versa). Hence, overall sleep duration and level of drowsiness may mitigate the association between work pressure and task performance^[4]. Workplace stress that persists over time can cause inactivity, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and other mental health issues that impair sleep.

The connection between mental health and job performance

Stress comes from a wide range of work-related situations and is an essential component of employees' lives. Excessive stress over time may cause mental health issues, including anxiety and depression. As a result, the study of mental health in connection to occupational stress has steadily grown in popularity due to rapid development and socioeconomic upheaval in recent decades^[7]. Workplace stress frequently results in mental health issues such as irritability, anxiety, and aggressive behavior, as well as sleep, memory, and attention issues. Mental health issues like worry or sadness might arise if the reaction lasts for a longer duration. Because managing work-related stress necessitates constant effort and the application of pertinent skills, it may be directly linked to certain psychological issues. Both workers' work schedules and businesses' regular operational procedures have been disturbed by the COVID-19 outbreak. As a result, workers may have experienced increased issues about mental health during this time. The following are the primary causes of the

large impact that employees' mental health has on their performance, according to prior research: When employees struggle with mental health issues, it becomes harder for them to stay focused, which naturally affects the quality and efficiency of their work. Over time, they may need to take more sick days to cope, which leads to a dip in overall productivity. On top of that, trying to constantly adapt and push through a stressful work environment can be emotionally exhausting. Instead of thriving, they're simply trying to survive each day, which takes a toll on both their well-being and performance. Therefore, their job happiness and performance decline as long as their needs are not met. Therefore, we suggest that stress at work has a detrimental effect on mental health, which in turn has a good effect on worker performance. To put it another way, we believe that the link between employee performance and job stress is mediated by mental health. Employees may have experienced apprehensive and anxious psychological states during the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of work-related stress brought on by changes in the external environment. Employees may have been unable to give their task their whole focus as a result, which might have led to a decline in their output. Employees have also had to deal with decreased pay and uncertain employment prospects as a result of the epidemic. As a result, mental health issues show themselves as pessimistic and anxious moods^[8].

The connection between employee performance and workplace stress

According to psychological concepts, job-related stress impacts workers' mental health, which in turn impacts the extent to which they work^[8]. Because an employee's performance is the outcome of their efforts at work, job stress greatly influences it^[8]. Nevertheless, prior studies have not consistently concluded that job stress and employee performance are related. According to one perspective, there is a strong positive correlation between work-related stress and employee performance, indicating that stress is a motivating factor that pushes workers to put in extra effort and increase productivity. Another perspective holds that stress at work has a detrimental effect on worker performance, implying that workers must spend time and effort managing stress, which adds to their workload and reduces productivity. The productivity of workers will peak when stress associated with work reaches an acceptable threshold^[8]. According to positive psychology, there are two primary types of job stress: challenge stress and hindrance stress. This allows us to further clarify the previously observed range of opinions^[8]. Challenge stress, in their opinion, is stress that has a positive impact on

workers' attitudes and behaviors at work, which raises work responsibility and enhances employee performance; on the other hand, hindrance stress hurts workers' attitudes and behaviors at work, which lowers employee performance by raising role ambiguity. SMEs were more likely to experience layoffs, pay cuts, or company insolvency during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, there is now more rivalry among businesses; managers may cause stress to their staff, who must then endure it to preserve and pursue their present and future career opportunities, respectively. Hindrance stress is a more common form of stress that harms workers' well-being and quality of life. It strains workers, who must devote time and effort to managing the stress^[8].

Variation in stress response by gender

Numerous studies have found a connection between gender and stress and burnout^[9]. In recent years, there has been a significant growth in the number of working women^[10]. Gender variations in stress responses, not stressor exposure, have been the focus of studies. One meta-analysis, for instance, discovered that males were somewhat more depersonalized than women and that women felt more emotional weariness. High psychological demands were positively associated with common mental illnesses at a moderate risk level, according to another meta-analysis, and this was higher for men than for women. However, a recent meta-analysis found that male nurses were more likely to experience burnout. Despite the contradictory results, varying responses suggest that gender affects how stress is interpreted. We anticipate that people will perceive stress differently as a result. Men and women may experience stress differently, according to some studies, due to variations in perception, exposure to stressors, and coping mechanisms. Women, for instance, are more likely to hold lower-level positions in the organizational structure and work part-time. Despite working in the same business or profession, the literature also indicates that men and women are subjected to distinct expectations and diverse working circumstances. According to gender theory, social, psychological, and biological variables impact how men and women acquire, learn, and interpret gender-specific roles^[9].

Stress level among Private vs Public Sector

Workloads and deadlines for professionals have grown significantly, and organisations are a major source of stress for employees. Because of these developments, workers are now experiencing occupational stress^[12]. According to the survey, workers in the private sector experience a little higher level of stress than those in the public sector. In addition, job experience and educational background have a big influence on how anxious individuals are^[11]. For example, public sector banks suffer from administrative processes, resource limitations, and slower career advancement, but private sector banks face extreme performance, long hours, and rivalry at work^[13].

Despite growing awareness of occupational stress and its potential effects, significant gaps persist in understanding how workplace stress simultaneously impacts sleep patterns, psychological health, and cognitive performance, especially among young employees in the Indian corporate sector. Most existing research isolates these domains, failing to explore their interconnected nature or how demographic factors like age, gender, and employment type modulate the experience of stress. Moreover, with changing work cultures marked by extended hours, digital over-connectivity, and blurred work-life boundaries, conventional stress assessments fall short in capturing modern realities. This study addresses these gaps by adopting an integrated approach, aiming to assess the combined influence of workplace stress on sleep quality, mental well-being, and cognitive functioning among full-time employees. The research seeks to provide evidence-based insights that can guide organizational strategies to mitigate stress and enhance employee productivity and well-being.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify the most common sleep disturbances associated with workplace stress.
- To explore emotional and psychological symptoms (e.g., anxiety, irritability, burnout) experienced by stressed employees.
- To evaluate how workplace stress affects cognitive functions such as attention, memory, and decision-making.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

S. NO	TITLE	YEAR	AUTHOR(s)	SUMMARY
1.	Stress at Work: Individuals or Structures?	2022	A.C.L. Davies	This article examines workplace stress through both psychological and legal lenses. It primarily critiques how legal systems, particularly health and safety law and tort law, address stress at work. Drawing from occupational psychology literature, especially the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, Davies argues that workplace stress is not just a matter of individual vulnerability but is also heavily influenced by structural and organizational factors. The article critiques how legal approaches tend to individualize stress, focusing on foreseeability and personal resilience, rather than addressing systemic workplace issues. The piece calls for more structural reforms and an integration of psychological insights into legal frameworks.
2.	Association Between Occupational Stress and Sleep Quality: A Systematic Review	2023	Yongchun Mao, Gunasunderi Raju, Muhammad Azrul Zabidi	This systematic review, published in the <i>Nature and Science of Sleep</i> , explores the relationship between occupational stress and sleep quality. It includes 38 studies published from 2011 to 2022, using data from diverse occupations and countries. Most studies employed

				cross-sectional designs and subjective measurement tools like the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) for sleep and various scales for occupational stress. The review found a consistent negative association between occupational stress and sleep quality, though specific dimensions varied. Contributing factors included genetics, lifestyle, work conditions, and psychological mediators. The authors emphasize the need for future research with objective measures and a more focused study on underrepresented occupational groups.
3.	Managing Stress at Workplace	2016	Ashok Kumar Panigrahi	This article discusses the growing challenge of stress in the modern workplace and its impact on employees' physical, psychological, and behavioral health. It outlines both internal (individual mindset) and external (job insecurity, odd hours, managerial style) causes of stress. The paper highlights various measurement methods (psychological, physiological, autonomic) and the consequences of stress, ranging from hypertension to depression. It emphasizes both individual strategies (sleep, hobbies, time management) and organizational strategies (work-life

				balance, use of tech, communication, retirement plans) to manage and reduce stress among employees.
4.	Daily Work Pressure and Task Performance: The Moderating Role of Recovery and Sleep	2022	Jørn Hetland, Arnold B. Bakker, Roar Espevik, Olav K. Olsen	This original research explores how daily work pressure affects task performance among naval cadets during a 30-day voyage, with sleep and recovery as moderating factors. The study finds that while daily work pressure can improve task performance, this effect is significantly enhanced when cadets get adequate sleep and engage in psychological detachment or relaxation between shifts. The study uses multilevel modeling and contributes to recovery and performance literature, especially in high-reliability organizational (HRO) settings.
5.	Shift Work Sleep Disorder and Job Stress in Shift Nurses: Implications for Preventive Interventions	2020	Gabriele d'Ettorre, Vincenza Pellicani, Anna Caroli, Mariarita Greco	This cross-sectional study investigated the relationship between shift work sleep disorder (SWSD), job stress, and gender differences among 580 shift-working nurses in Italy. Using validated tools including the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ), Bergen Insomnia Scale, and Epworth Sleepiness Scale, the study found that more women than men experienced high job strain, insomnia, and excessive daytime

				sleepiness. Interestingly, while no significant association was found between high job strain and sleep disturbances, low social support was strongly linked with insomnia and sleepiness, particularly in women. The authors conclude that preventive interventions should prioritize social support mechanisms, especially among female shift nurses, to mitigate sleep-related issues and job stress. The study highlights the gender-specific vulnerability and emphasizes the need for longitudinal research to evaluate targeted support-based strategies.
6.	Factors Affecting Sleep Quality in Firefighters	2018	Mahnaz Abbasi, Majid Rajabi, Zohreh Yazdi, Ali Akbar Shafikhani	This cross-sectional study investigates the impact of various ergonomic, psychological, and demographic factors on sleep quality among 118 firefighters in Qazvin, Iran. Using validated instruments such as the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI), Beck Depression Inventory, HSE Stress Questionnaire, and the Nordic Musculoskeletal Questionnaire, the study found that 59.3% of participants had poor sleep quality. The key factors significantly associated with poor sleep were musculoskeletal disorders (particularly low back pain), shift

				work, high body mass index (BMI), and occupational stress. In multivariate analysis, all variables except occupational stress remained significant. The study emphasizes the need for early intervention and preventive strategies to mitigate sleep-related issues in firefighters, which can adversely affect their safety and performance.
7	Occupational Stress and Employees' Complete Mental Health: A Cross-Cultural Empirical Study	2020	Alcides Moreno Fortes, Lili Tian, and E. Scott Huebner	This cross-cultural study investigates the relationship between occupational stress and complete mental health among employees in Cabo Verde (Africa) and China (Asia). The study also examines burnout as a mediator and optimism as a moderator in this relationship. It uses a dual-factor model of mental health that includes both positive (emotional, social, psychological well-being) and negative (anxiety, depression) components. Data was collected from 440 employees using standardized tools like the OSQ-GV, MBI-GS, MHC-SF, MHI-5, and LOT-R. The results revealed that occupational stress negatively impacts mental health in both samples, and burnout fully mediates this relationship. While optimism does not moderate the link between stress and mental

				health directly, it does moderate the effect of stress on burnout . The study highlights the cultural differences in stress responses and mental health outcomes, suggesting that optimism and collectivist cultural values may influence how stress affects workers in different countries.
8.	Work Stress, Mental Health, and Employee Performance	2022	Biao Chen, Lu Wang, Biao Li, and Weixing Liu	This original research article, published in <i>Frontiers in Psychology</i> , investigates the relationship between work stress, mental health, and employee performance, particularly in SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using survey data from 196 employees in China, the study finds that work stress has a significant negative impact on employee performance , primarily mediated through mental health deterioration . While servant leadership was theorized as a moderating factor in reducing the negative effects of stress on mental health, this moderating effect was not statistically significant . The study emphasizes that employee well-being is essential for sustaining performance during crises, and recommends targeted mental health

				and leadership strategies to manage stress effectively in SME contexts.
9.	Is Gender an Antecedent to Workplace Stressors? A Systematic Review and an Empirical Study Using a Person-Centred Approach	2023	Roberta Fida, David Watson, Valerio Ghezzi, Claudio Barbaranelli, Matteo Ronchetti, Cristina Di Tecco	This study explores whether gender influences exposure to workplace stressors. It combines a systematic review (Study 1) with an empirical study (Study 2) using data from 11,289 public administration employees in Italy. The systematic review examined gender differences across stressors like job demands, control, support, relationships, and role clarity. It found inconsistent results, with some evidence showing women were more exposed to emotional demands and interpersonal stressors. The empirical study used latent profile analysis to identify three risk profiles—virtuous (low stress), average, and at-risk (high stress)—for both men and women. While the structure of stress exposure was similar for both genders, men were more likely to be in the virtuous profile, and women in the average profile. The study concludes that gender differences in exposure to workplace stressors are minimal and inconsistent , especially in gender-balanced sectors,

				challenging assumptions of strong gender effects in stress exposure.
10.	Gender Differences on Coping with Job Stress and Organizational Outcomes	1998	Christina M. Christie and Ken Shultz	This study investigates how men and women differ in coping with job-related stress and how these differences impact organizational outcomes. Using a sample of employees, the authors examine the relationship between gender, coping strategies, perceived stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The results reveal that women tend to use more emotion-focused coping strategies, whereas men are more likely to use problem-focused strategies. However, coping effectiveness did not differ significantly by gender regarding outcomes. Both coping styles showed correlations with stress levels and job satisfaction. The study concludes that while there are some gender-based differences in coping styles, the broader implications for organizational outcomes are relatively consistent across genders
11.	Prevalence of Work Stress among Private and Public	2021	Jayeeta Biswas and Subodh Kumar	This empirical study, published in the <i>International Journal of Indian Psychology</i>, investigates the levels of occupational stress among employees working in private and

	Sector Employees in Delhi: A Differential Study			public sectors in Delhi, India. Using the Occupational Stress Index (OSI) Scale and data from 60 respondents (30 from each sector), the study found that private sector employees exhibited higher overall stress compared to their public sector counterparts. Significant differences were observed in stress sub-factors such as role overload, ambiguity, conflict, low status, strenuous working conditions, and unprofitability , all of which were more pronounced among private sector workers. In contrast, public sector employees reported higher stress due to group and political pressures, responsibility for subordinates, and poor participation . The study emphasizes the importance of sector-specific stress management interventions. It suggests that private organizations, in particular, must enhance employee support systems and provide structured coping programs to improve mental well-being and productivity.
12.	Organizational Role Stress Among Public and Private Sector	2012	Bushara Bano and Rajiv Kumar Jha	Published in <i>The Lahore Journal of Business</i> , this study investigates differences in organizational role stress (ORS) between public and private sector employees in Uttar

	Employees: A Comparative Study		Pradesh, India. Using Pareek's Organizational Role Stress Scale, the authors measured ten dimensions of role stress (e.g., role erosion, role overload, personal inadequacy) among 302 employees (182 public, 120 private). The results showed that although both groups experienced moderate overall stress levels, private sector employees were more affected by role overload, inter-role distance, and personal inadequacy , while no significant difference was found in total stress levels . Educational qualifications and work experience had a significant impact on ORS, whereas age and marital status did not. The authors concluded that targeted interventions are needed to address sector-specific stressors, and emphasized the importance of understanding role-specific and demographic influences on employee stress.
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CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH QUESTION

- How does workplace stress affect the sleep quality and sleep-related behaviors of full-time employees?
- What emotional and psychological symptoms are commonly reported by employees experiencing workplace stress?
- In what ways does workplace stress impair cognitive performance, including focus, memory, and decision-making?
- How do demographic factors such as gender, age, and employment sector influence the experience and outcomes of workplace stress?

Study Design

A cross-sectional descriptive study has been conducted to explore the relationship between workplace stress, sleep patterns, psychological health, and cognitive performance among full-time employees. The study utilized a semi-structured, self-administered questionnaire.

Study Setting

The study was conducted in an **online environment**, targeting employees across different work sectors, including **private companies, government organizations, NGOs, and corporate offices**.

Study Population

The target population includes **full-time employees** aged 18 years and above, employed in various professional sectors across India. The study seeks to understand workplace stress and related cognitive and psychological outcomes in adults who are actively working and managing occupational responsibilities.

Inclusion Criteria

- Adults aged **18 years or above**.
- Currently employed on a **full-time basis**.

- **Willing to participate** voluntarily and provide **informed consent**.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals with **diagnosed psychiatric or neurological conditions** not directly related to occupational stress (e.g., schizophrenia, epilepsy).
- Employees who are **on long-term medical leave, maternity/paternity leave, or not actively working** at the time of data collection.

Study Tool

A structured self-administered questionnaire has been developed, integrating validated components from established psychometric tools. The questionnaire is divided into the following sections:

1. Demographics

- Age, gender, sector of employment, job role, work experience (in years), working hours per week, and type of shift (day/night/rotational).

2. Workplace Stress Indicators

- Adapted from the **Brief Job Stress Questionnaire (BJSQ)**, this section assessed perceived job demands, control, interpersonal relationships, and work-related pressure. Sample items will include Likert-scale questions evaluating workload intensity, autonomy, supervisory support, and job satisfaction.

3. Sleep Patterns and Quality

- Items derived from the **Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI)** were used to assess average sleep duration, subjective sleep quality, frequency of sleep disturbances (e.g., waking during the night), and daytime dysfunction due to poor sleep.

4. Psychological Health

- Inspired by the **Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21)**, this section explored the emotional wellbeing of participants by asking about recent experiences of anxiety, irritability, sadness, low energy, and burnout symptoms.

5. Cognitive Performance

- Drawing from the **Cognitive Failures Questionnaire (CFQ)** and **Work Limitation Questionnaire (WLQ)**, participants have self-report issues such as forgetfulness, difficulty concentrating, impaired decision-making, and reduced task efficiency at work.

Each item used a **Likert scale** (e.g., ranging from “Never” to “Always” or “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”), allowing quantification of subjective experiences for analysis.

Duration of Study

The study was conducted over an estimated period of **3 months**

Sample Size

The sample size for this study was estimated using **Cochran’s formula**

$$n = z^2 p (1 - p) / d^2$$

Where:

- n = required sample size
- Z = 1.96 (Z-value for 95% confidence level)
- p = estimated prevalence of the characteristic of interest (in this case, prevalence of workplace stress among employees)
- d = desired margin of error (typically set at 5%, or 0.05)

For the present study, the estimated prevalence of workplace stress among employees was assumed to be **50% (p = 0.5)** to ensure maximum sample size and accommodate variability, as no prior prevalence figure specific to the target population was available.

Thus, the **minimum required sample size** was calculated to be approximately **384** participants.

However, due to time constraints, logistical limitations, and resource availability, the final achieved sample size for this exploratory study was **115 full-time employees**. This sample size is considered adequate for preliminary analysis and identifying key trends

in the relationship between workplace stress, sleep, psychological health, and cognitive performance.

Sampling Technique

A **non-probability sampling method** was employed, combining:

- **Purposive sampling:** to specifically target individuals who meet the inclusion criteria (i.e., full-time employment),
- **Convenience sampling:** leveraging the researcher's existing professional and academic networks, social media platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, WhatsApp groups), and snowball referrals for questionnaire dissemination.

Data Collection Procedure

- A Google Form was designed, beginning with an informed consent form that clearly outlines the purpose of the study, confidentiality assurances, and voluntary participation.
- The form link was circulated through email invitations, LinkedIn connections, WhatsApp groups, and internal workplace networks.
- Participants were instructed to complete the form in one sitting, taking approximately 10–12 minutes.
- Data was collected anonymously, with no personal identifiers recorded, to maintain respondent confidentiality and reduce social desirability bias.

Ethical Considerations

- An informed consent statement was included at the beginning of the Google Form.
- All participation were voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time.
- No identifying personal information was collected, ensuring anonymity and privacy.
- Data was stored securely and used exclusively for academic research purposes.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings from the survey conducted among 115 full-time employees across various sectors in India. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire incorporating validated psychometric tools to assess workplace stress, sleep patterns, psychological well-being, and cognitive performance. The results are organized to reflect the core objectives of the study, highlighting participants' perceptions of stress, the prevalence of sleep-related issues, emotional and behavioral symptoms, and cognitive challenges encountered in the workplace. These findings provide a foundation for interpreting the broader implications of occupational stress on employee health and performance.

Table 4.1: Age-wise distribution of respondents (n=115)

Age Group (Years)	Number of Respondents	Proportion (%)
18-24	29	25.2
25-34	52	45.2
35-44	15	13
45-54	13	11.3
55 and Above	6	5.21

The following table shows the age distribution of the 115 respondents who took part in the study: the largest percentage of respondents (45.2%) are in the 25–34 age group, which means that almost half of the sample is made up of young adults in this age group, the next largest percentage is in the 18–24 age group, which makes up 25.2% of the respondents and shows a significant representation of younger people; the middle-aged groups, which are 35–44 and 45–54 years old, make up 13% and 11.3% of the respondents, respectively, showing a relatively small but significant participation; the lowest percentage is in the 55 years and older category, with only 5.21% of respondents falling into this older age group.

Figure 4.1: Gender Distribution of Respondents (n=115)

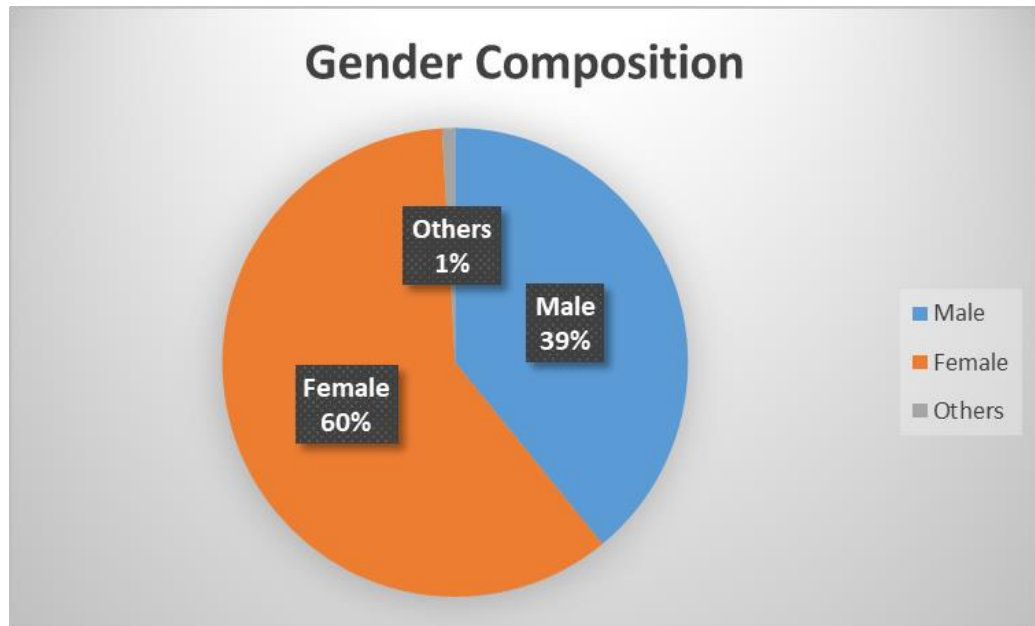
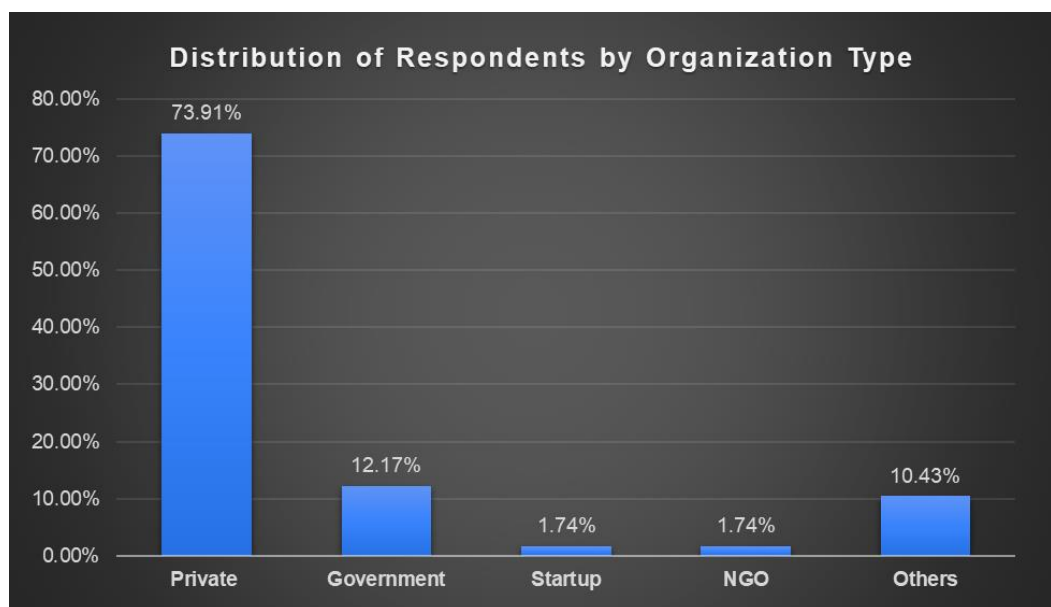


Figure 1 shows the gender distribution of respondents (n=115), where 60% are female, 39.1% are male, and 0.9% identify as others.

Figure 4.2: Organization type



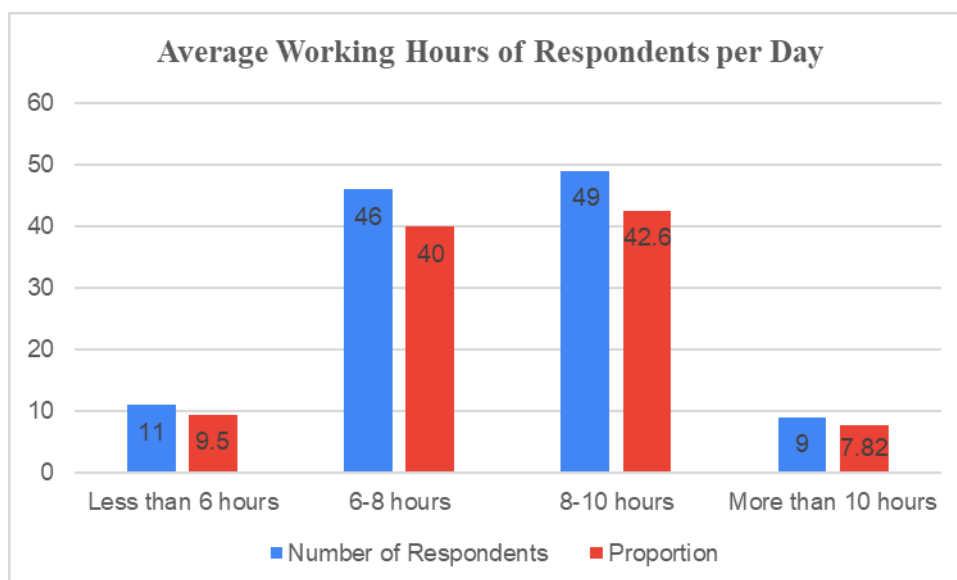
According to the graphic, 12.17% of respondents work for the government, while the majority of respondents (73.91%) are engaged in the private sector. NGOs and startups each contribute 1.74%, which is a lesser percentage, while 10.43% are classified as others.

Table 4.2: Years of Professional Experience of Respondents (n=115)

Years of Professional Experience	Number of Respondents	Proportion (%)
Less than 1 year	41	35.6%
1-3 years	25	21.7%
3-5 years	13	11.3%
5-10 years	7	6.08%
More than 10 years	29	25.21%

The majority of respondents (35.6%) have less than a year of professional experience, according to the statistics, while 25.21% have more than 10 years. 11.3% claim having 3–5 years of experience, while 21.7% report having 1–3 years. There is a smaller group of those with 5–10 years of experience (6.08%).

Figure 4.3: Average hours of working of Respondents (n=115)



The Bar chart shows the distribution of respondents based on their average working hours per day. The largest group (42.6%) works 8-10 hours daily, closely followed by 6-8 hours

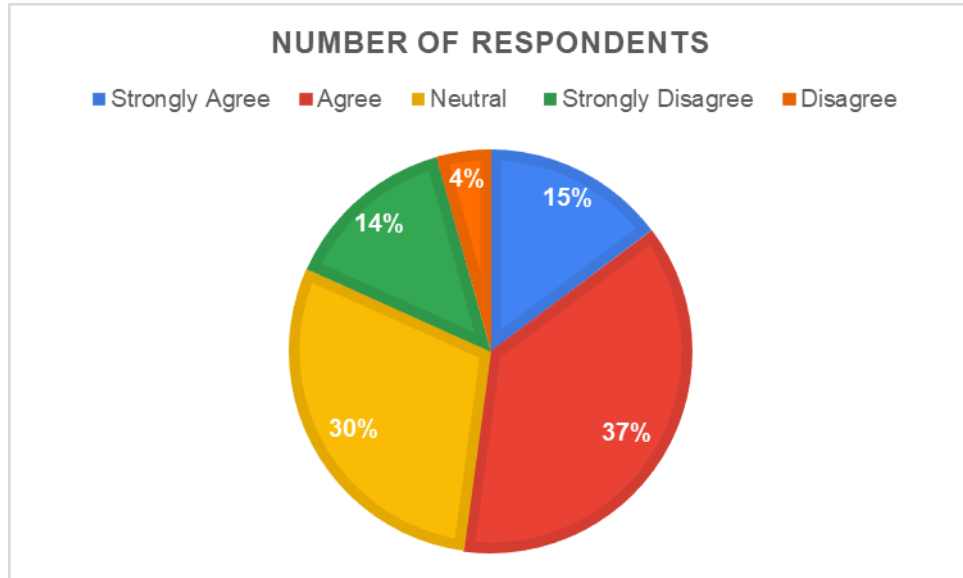
(40%). Only 9.5% reported working less than 6 hours, while 7.8 % work more than 10 hours. This indicates that the majority of respondents have a standard or slightly extended workday, with relatively few working significant short or long hours.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents based on their Perception of Work Overload (n=115).

Response Category	Number of Respondents	Proportion (%)
Strongly Agree	21	18.3
Agree	46	40
Neutral	37	32.2
Disagree	7	6.1
Strongly Disagree	4	3.5

A substantial proportion of respondents reported experiencing work overload, with 46 individuals (40%) agreeing and 21 individuals (18.3%) strongly agreeing with the statement. This indicates that over half of the participants (58.3%) perceive their work responsibilities as overwhelming. Conversely, only 7 respondents (6.1%) disagreed and 4 respondents (3.5%) strongly disagreed, suggesting that a minority of participants (9.6%) did not share the feeling of work overload. Meanwhile, 37 respondents (32.2%) maintained a neutral stance, neither agreeing nor disagreeing, which could imply uncertainty or variability in their workload experience.

Figure 4.4: Emotional Exhaustion at the End of the Workday (n=115)



Most respondents (37%) agreed they felt emotionally exhausted at the end of the workday, followed by 30% neutral. Only a small percentage (4%) strongly disagreed. This suggests emotional exhaustion is common among the participants.

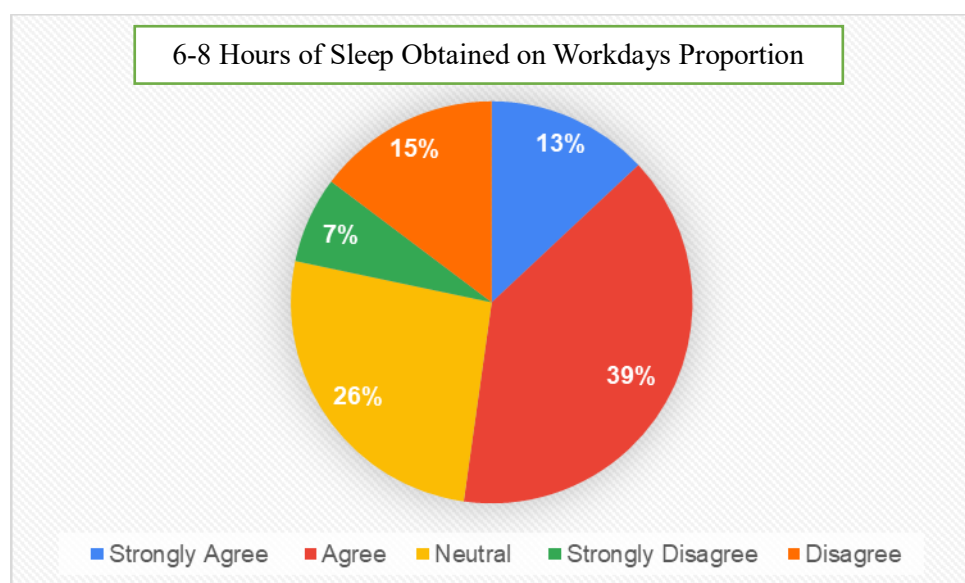
Table 4.4: Perception of Workplace Stressors among Employees(n=115)

Statement	Strongly Agree (n/%)	Agree (n/%)	Neutral (n/%)	Disagree (n/%)	Strongly Disagree (n/%)
I am expected to complete too many tasks within a limited time frame	13(11.3%)	44(38.2%)	38(33%)	14(12.1%)	6(5.21%)
I find it difficult to make clear decisions when I am under workplace stress.	20(17.3%)	33(28.6%)	36(31.3%)	19(16.5%)	7(6.08%)
I am expected to be constantly available	21(18.2%)	27(23.4%)	39(33.9%)	16(13.9%)	12(10.4%)

for work-related communication (email, phone, etc.) outside work hours.					
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The data indicates that a substantial proportion of employees perceive task overload as a significant stressor, with 38.2% agreeing and 11.3% strongly agreeing that they are expected to complete too many tasks within a limited timeframe. Additionally, 33% remained neutral, indicating possible variation in workload across roles. When asked about decision making under workplace stress, 28.6% agreed and 17.3% strongly agreed that stress hampers their clarity, while 31.3% were neutral, and a smaller proportion (16.5% and 6.08%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, respectively. This highlights that workplace stress may be impairing cognitive performance for a notable number of respondents. Regarding constant availability outside work hours, 18.2% strongly agreed and 23.4% agreed, showing that over 40% of employees feel pressured to stay connected beyond work hours. 33.9% remained neutral and 13.9% disagreed, suggesting this issue is prominent but not universal.

Figure 4.5: Hours of sleep obtained on Workdays among Respondents (n=115)



Most respondents (39%) agree that they get 6-8 hours of sleep on workdays, while 26% are neutral. A smaller percentage disagree (15%) or strongly disagree (7%), indicating some variability in sleep patterns. Overall, most employees report getting a moderate amount of sleep during workdays.

Figure 4.6: Impact of workplace stress on Sleep Pattern Among Respondents (n=115)



One-third of the respondents (33%) remained neutral about workplace stress affecting their sleep. However, 46% (16% strongly agree + 30% agree) acknowledged a negative impact, highlighting a clear concern. A smaller portion (21%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

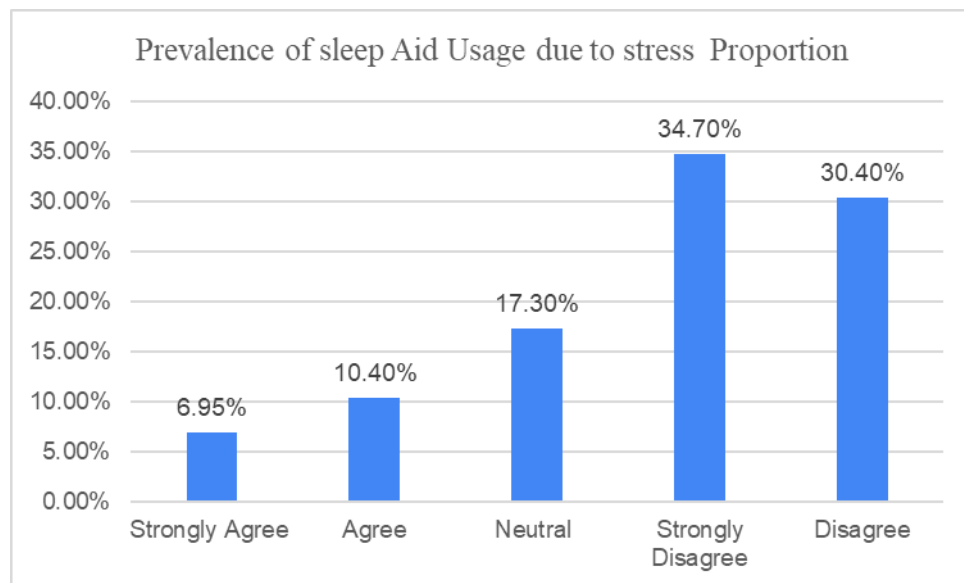
Table 4.5: Reported Sleep-Related Issues and Behavioral Responses Attributed to Workplace Stress(n=115)

Response Category	Number of Respondents	Proportion (%)
Strongly Agree	20	17.4%
Agree	37	32.2%
Neutral	36	31.3%

Strongly Disagree	8	7%
Disagree	14	12.2%

Nearly half of the respondents (49.6%) reported that workplace stress affects their sleep and behavior, while 31.1%, remained neutral, and only 19.2% disagreed, highlighting a strong perceived link between stress and sleep-related issues.

Figure 4.7: Prevalence of sleep Aid usage due to stress(n=115)



The majority of respondents (65.1%) , disagreed and strongly disagreed with relying on sleep aids due to stress, indicating low dependence overall. Only 17.35% reported agreement, while 17.3% remained neutral, suggesting occasional use or uncertainty. This reflects limited reliance on sleep aids in response to stress among participants.

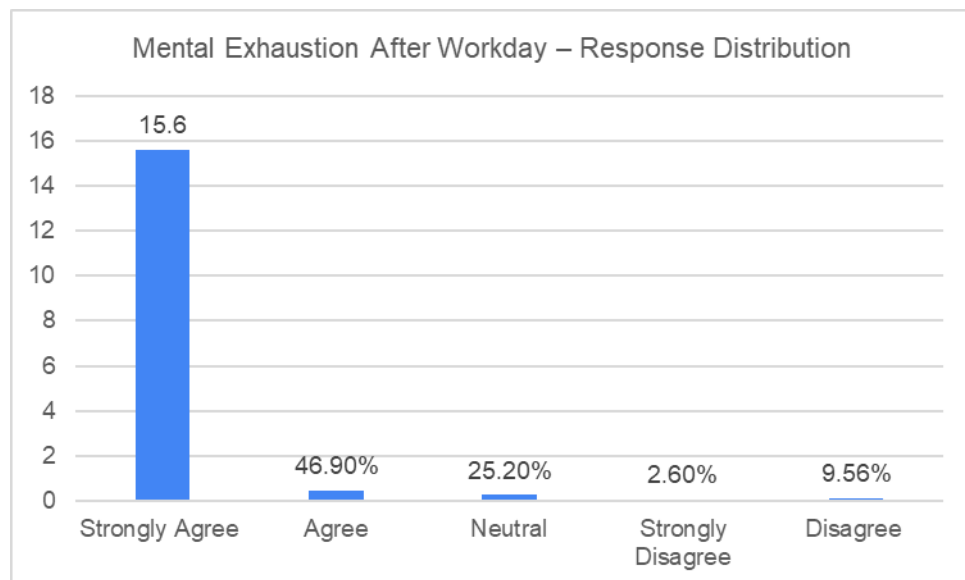
Table 4.6: Distribution of Respondents with sleep quality worsening due to an increase in workload (n=115).

Response Category	Number of Respondents	Proportion (%)
Strongly Agree	19	16.5
Agree	46	40
Neutral	28	24.3

Disagree	18	15.6
Strongly Disagree	4	3.47

A majority of participants (56.5%) reported that their sleep quality tends to decline when their workload increases, highlighting a noticeable connection between work pressure and sleep disturbances. While 24.3% of respondents remained neutral on this issue, only a small fraction (19.07%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. These findings suggest that heavier workloads are likely to negatively impact most individuals' ability to sleep well.

Figure 4.8: Distribution of Respondents Reporting Mental Exhaustion After the Workday(n=115)



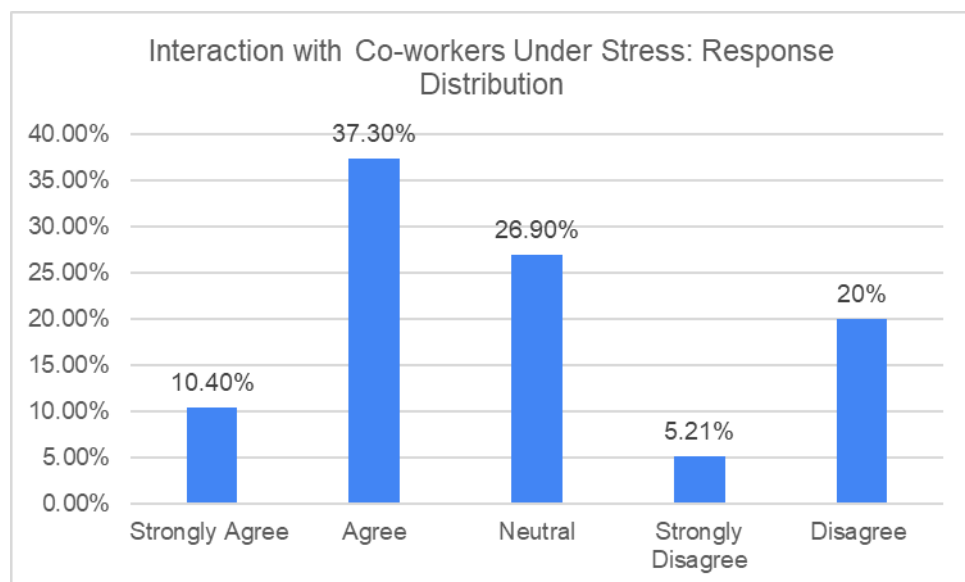
A large number of participants (62.5%) shared that they often feel mentally exhausted after a typical workday, underscoring the strong impact of work-related stress on mental well-being. About 25.2% were neutral, which may reflect occasional or context-specific fatigue. Only 12.16% disagreed, suggesting that mental exhaustion is a common and recurring experience for the majority.

Table 4.7: Distribution of Responses to the Impact of Stress on Personal and Professional Relationships(n=115).

Response Category	Number of Respondents	Proportion
Strongly Agree	19	16.5%
Agree	38	33%
Neutral	35	30.4%
Strongly Disagree	4	3.47%
Disagree	19	16.5%

Nearly half of the respondents (49.5%) acknowledged that stress has affected their relationships with family, friends, or colleagues, highlighting the significant toll stress can take on personal and social connections. Around 30.4% remained neutral, possibly reflecting occasional or uncertain effects, while just 20% felt their relationships had not been impacted. These insights suggest that for many individuals, stress doesn't just stay at work—it often extends into their interactions with others.

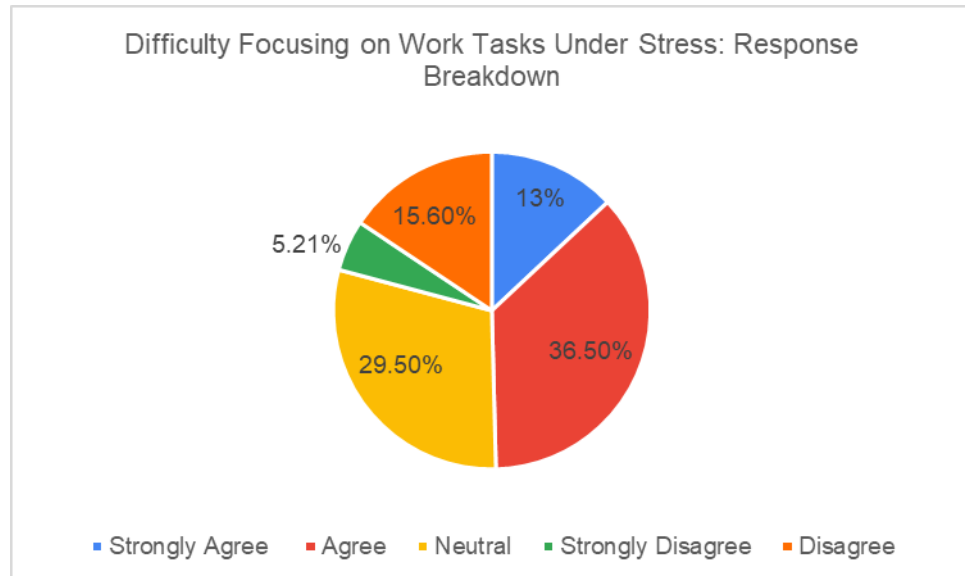
Figure 4.9: Response Distribution to Avoidance of Co-worker Interaction During Stress(n=115)



Nearly half of the participants (47.7%) shared that they tend to distance themselves from co-worker interactions when experiencing stress, pointing to social withdrawal as a common response to workplace pressure. Around 26.9% chose a neutral stance, possibly

indicating that their behavior changes depending on the situation. Meanwhile, 25.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that a smaller portion of respondents continues to engage socially at work even when under stress.

Figure 4.10: Difficulty Focusing on Work Tasks Under Stress: Response Breakdown(n=115)



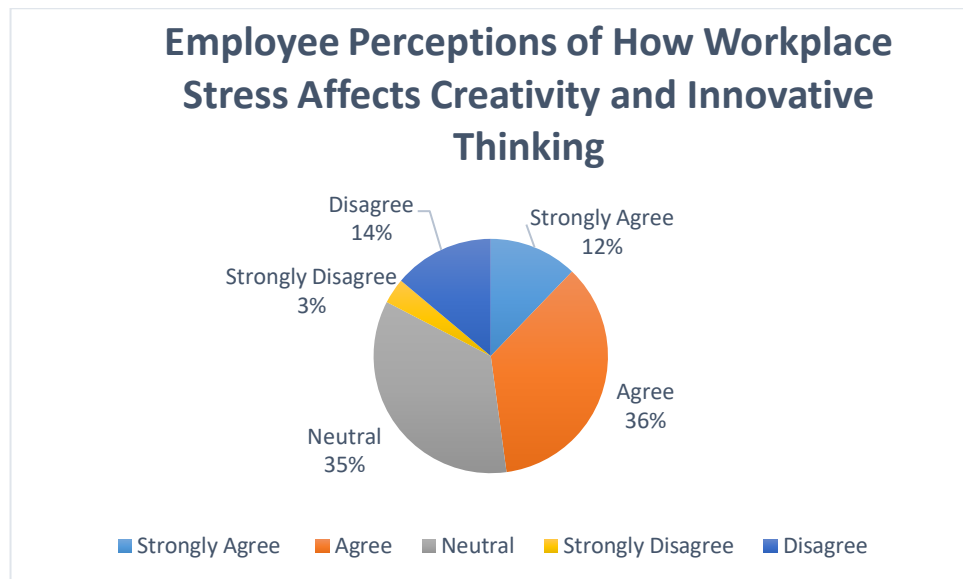
The data shows that nearly half of the respondents (49.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that they have trouble focusing on work tasks when under stress, indicating that stress significantly hampers concentration for many individuals. About 29.5% remained neutral, which may reflect variability in how stress affects their focus. Meanwhile, 20.81% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that a smaller group is less affected by stress in terms of task concentration.

Table 4.8: Impaired recall of work-related information during stressful periods(n=115)

Response Category	Number of Respondents	Proportion
Strongly Agree	13	11.3%
Agree	45	39.13%
Neutral	31	26.9%
Strongly Disagree	5	4.34%
Disagree	21	18.2%

More than half of the respondents (50.43%) acknowledge that stress affects their recall of work-related information, suggesting a strong perceived link between stress and cognitive function in the workplace. Meanwhile, about a quarter are unsure (neutral), and roughly one-fifth do not perceive this connection.

Figure 4.11: Employee Perceptions of How Workplace Stress Affects Creativity and Innovative Thinking(n=115)



The pie chart reveals that most employees believe stress negatively impacts their creativity and innovation. Specifically, (36%) agree and (12%) strongly agree, totaling 48 percent who perceive a detrimental effect. Meanwhile, 35% remain neutral, indicating uncertainty or a mixed experience. On the contrary, 14% disagree and 3% strongly disagree, showing that only 17% do not see a negative link. Overall, this suggests that nearly half the respondents recognize a significant negative influence of workplace stress on creative and innovative output.

Objective-wise summary of findings

◆ Objective 1: To identify the most common sleep disturbances associated with workplace stress

- A **significant proportion** of respondents reported **poor sleep quality** associated with increased **workload and job pressure**.
- **Over 56%** agreed or strongly agreed that **stress affects their sleep quality**.
- **Nearly 50%** admitted to **changes in sleep schedule and behavior** during stressful work periods.
- Although most respondents reported **6–8 hours of sleep**, many still experienced **fatigue and non-restorative sleep**, suggesting quality was affected more than duration.
- **Only 17%** used **sleep aids**, indicating either **under-treatment** or a **preference for natural coping methods**.
- These findings **mirror Mao et al. (2023)**, who found a **consistent negative association** between **occupational stress and sleep quality** across occupations.

◆ Objective 2: To explore emotional and psychological symptoms experienced by stressed employees

- **More than 67%** reported feeling **emotionally and mentally exhausted** by the end of their workday.
- Over **50%** experienced **stress-related behavioral changes** such as **irritability, mood swings, and social withdrawal**.
- About **50%** admitted that workplace stress affected their **personal and professional relationships**.
- Respondents reported a **tendency to avoid co-worker interactions** when under stress.
- These symptoms are consistent with **emotional burnout**, as noted in **Panigrahi (2016)** and **Fida et al. (2023)**.
- **Women and early-career professionals** appeared more affected, supporting literature that highlights **demographic vulnerabilities**.

- Emotional distress was observed to **spill over beyond the workplace**, impacting **social and familial life** as well.

⇨ Objective 3: To evaluate how workplace stress affects cognitive functions (attention, memory, decision-making)

- **Around 50% reported difficulty focusing** on work tasks under stress.
- **Over 50% experienced memory lapses**, particularly with work-related information.
- Many respondents stated that **stress reduced their creativity and innovative thinking**.
- Participants noted **poor decision-making and problem-solving ability** under pressure.
- These cognitive disruptions align with **Christie & Shultz (1998)** and **Chen et al. (2022)**, who found that **chronic stress impairs attention, memory, and cognitive agility**.
- **Mental exhaustion** was seen as both an **emotional outcome** and a **trigger for cognitive decline**, affecting workplace productivity and efficiency.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The present study was designed to explore the complex interplay between occupational stress, mental health, sleep patterns, and cognitive performance in the contemporary workplace. Data collected from 115 respondents across various sectors reveals important patterns that align with and extend existing findings from the academic literature. A key demographic finding of the study is that a substantial portion of the sample consisted of young adults between 25–34 years of age, followed by individuals aged 18–24, indicating that the workforce examined primarily comprises early-career professionals. Additionally, the gender distribution was skewed toward females, who comprised 60% of the participants. The majority of respondents worked in the private sector, which is typically known for longer working hours and high-performance expectations. These demographic characteristics offer important context, as they reflect a segment of the population that is increasingly vulnerable to work-related pressures. Similar demographic trends have been noted in earlier research, including that of Chen et al. (2022), who emphasized the heightened stress burden among young employees working in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this study, over 58% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they frequently experienced work overload, and more than two-thirds reported emotional or mental exhaustion at the end of their workday. This finding is consistent with Panigrahi's (2016) conclusion that workload is one of the most common sources of stress in the Indian professional landscape. Similarly, Mao et al. (2023) found job demands and work stress adversely affect not only employee health but also overall sleep quality and productivity. The current study confirms this pattern, illustrating that those who experience heavier workloads often report diminished sleep quality and decreased ability to focus on tasks. The implications are clear: chronic exposure to excessive job demands continues to be a critical concern for employee health and organizational performance.

A major theme that emerged in this study was the impact of stress on cognitive performance. Nearly half of all respondents reported difficulty concentrating under pressure, and more than half acknowledged that their ability to recall work-related information was impaired during periods of stress. These findings closely mirror those presented by Christie and Shultz (1998), who demonstrated that high stress levels significantly affect memory, attention, and decision-making capacity in workplace contexts. While their study also explored gender differences in coping strategies, our

research did not emphasize gender as a central variable, although the overrepresentation of women in our sample suggests a potential avenue for future research. The respondents perceived reduction in creative thinking and innovation due to stress, reported by nearly 48%, also aligns with Chen et al.'s (2022) assertion that sustained psychological strain leads to diminished cognitive and performance-related outcomes. Collectively, these results affirm that stress not only affects emotional and physiological states but also erodes employees' capacity to perform effectively and think creatively.

Though our study did not explicitly test gender differences, the insights gathered relate to findings from Fida et al. (2023), who conducted both a systematic review and an empirical analysis to assess whether gender affects exposure to workplace stressors. Their conclusion that gender-based differences are minimal and inconsistent, especially in balanced or public-sector contexts, adds credibility to the understanding that stress response may be more role- and context-dependent than strictly gender-specific. Our findings are partially in agreement with this, as women in our sample were disproportionately represented in the emotionally exhausted category, suggesting that job roles and expectations may play a larger role in shaping stress outcomes than gender alone.

Perhaps one of the most consistent patterns observed in the current study is the link between occupational stress and sleep disruption. Over 56% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that increased workload adversely affected their sleep, and nearly 50% reported that stress caused behavioural and sleep disturbances. These patterns correspond directly with Mao et al.'s (2023) systematic review, which demonstrated a negative association between occupational stress and sleep quality across global contexts. Respondents in our study described their sleep as moderate in duration, with many sleeping 6–8 hours on workdays. However, the quality of that sleep appeared to suffer under work stress. Interestingly, only 17.3% of participants admitted to using sleep aids to manage this stress, suggesting a general tendency to either cope naturally or avoid pharmacological interventions, possibly due to age, health awareness, or accessibility.

Another significant behavioural impact of stress observed in this study involves social interaction and relationship dynamics. Nearly half of the participants reported withdrawing from co-worker interactions when under stress, and a similar proportion noted that stress had negatively affected their personal and professional relationships. This social withdrawal may indicate emotional fatigue, avoidance coping strategies, or a

lack of supportive environments at work. These findings align with earlier research from Panigrahi (2016), who emphasized the importance of organizational support in buffering the negative effects of stress on interpersonal relationships. Fida et al. (2023) also emphasized that social and emotional workplace stressors, such as the pressure to be constantly available or to manage emotional labour, can negatively impact employees' ability to build or sustain healthy workplace relationships. In our data, nearly half of the respondents agreed that constant availability outside of work hours (via email or phone) was a stressor, illustrating the pervasiveness of boundary less work cultures in modern organizational life.

Cognitive outcomes such as difficulty focusing, reduced recall, and impaired innovation were prominently reported by participants in our study, painting a consistent picture with previous research. Employees under stress experienced measurable mental fatigue, and this decline in cognitive sharpness appears to directly impact job performance. More than 62% of respondents described feeling mentally exhausted at the end of their workday, reinforcing the idea that cognitive load under chronic stress may deplete employees' psychological resources, leading to long-term burnout and decreased organizational effectiveness. These outcomes underscore the urgency of integrating well-being programs and cognitive health assessments into human resource policies, particularly in high-stress professions.

In sum, the findings from this study strongly echo those of existing literature across national and occupational boundaries. The negative associations between occupational stress and sleep, mental health, cognitive performance, and interpersonal relationships are consistent, reinforcing the global and persistent nature of this issue. While demographic variables such as age and work experience offer some explanatory power, the data suggests that the problem is deeply embedded in structural aspects of modern work environments, such as workload expectations, digital availability, and emotional labour, rather than in individual traits alone.

This discussion illustrates that the consequences of workplace stress are not only personal but systemic. The convergence of findings from both primary data and existing literature affirms that organizations must urgently move beyond surface-level wellness programs and address the root causes of employee distress through role-specific and culture-sensitive interventions. Holistic approaches that incorporate workload management, mental health support, flexible work structures, and sleep hygiene promotion can create

healthier, more productive workforces. The current study makes a meaningful contribution to this ongoing discourse and underscores the value of employee-cantered research in driving policy-level and organizational change.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In a world where productivity is idolized, competition is relentless, and constant digital connectivity is seen as commitment, workplace stress has quietly evolved into one of the most pervasive and persistent health challenges of our generation. While organizations race to meet targets and optimize performance, many employees are silently burning out—emotionally drained, cognitively depleted, and sleep-deprived. This dissertation sought to move beyond the numbers, diving deep into the human cost of workplace stress and its far-reaching impact on sleep patterns, psychological well-being, and cognitive functioning.

Through primary data collected from 115 working professionals across sectors, this study uncovered a profound and widespread experience of strain. These individuals were not merely participants in a survey; they were voices from the frontline of modern work culture. Nearly 60% reported overwhelming workloads, over half experienced cognitive disruption under stress, and a significant number admitted that their personal and professional relationships had begun to suffer. Emotional exhaustion was common, focus was waning, and sleep, once a natural healer, had become a nightly struggle. These findings are not isolated data points. They are a mirror reflecting the daily battles fought behind glowing screens and boardroom doors.

The resonance of these findings with global literature, from Mao et al.'s cross-sectoral insights on sleep disturbance to Chen et al.'s findings on mental health mediating employee performance, only strengthens the urgency of the issue. Where previous research presented models and metrics, this study presents reality. A reality where the private sector, especially among younger demographics, often becomes a crucible for stress, demanding more than the mind and body were designed to give.

One of the most compelling takeaways from this research is that stress is not simply caused by doing too much, it's caused by doing too much without enough in return. It is the imbalance between soaring expectations and diminishing support; between always being 'on' and never feeling heard. The pressures of meeting deadlines, the erosion of work-life boundaries, the expectation to be available beyond office hours, and the lack of psychological recovery time form a toxic cocktail that seeps into all areas of life—sleep, relationships, concentration, and self-esteem.

Sleep, in particular, emerged as a silent casualty in the war against productivity. With over 56% of respondents linking poor sleep to increased workload and stress, it becomes evident that sleep is not a separate health concern it is a central pillar that holds together mental health, memory retention, emotional regulation, and workplace performance. Yet, instead of being protected, it is often sacrificed on the altar of deadlines and deliverables.

Cognitive functioning, another crucial area explored in this study, reveals how stress doesn't merely exhaust the body it corrodes mental clarity and decision-making abilities. Memory lapses, difficulty concentrating, impaired creativity, and reduced problem-solving capacity were all commonly reported. These findings validate earlier psychological theories but also challenge organizations to reframe their understanding of performance. High performance is not born from relentless pressure but from environments where the brain is rested, the mind is calm, and the employee feels valued.

Equally revealing was the social dimension of stress. Nearly half the respondents reported withdrawing from peer interactions or experiencing relational strain due to stress. This demonstrates that the repercussions of occupational stress extend far beyond individual wellness—they ripple outward, disrupting teamwork, morale, and workplace culture. Social disconnection under stress reflects a broader organizational need: the need for compassionate leadership, psychological safety, and workplace cultures that promote inclusivity, empathy, and support.

Although this study did not focus solely on gendered experiences, the disproportionate reporting of emotional exhaustion among women echoes global findings that stress is often felt differently and more intensely by women, due to both societal expectations and workplace inequalities. Future studies would benefit from deeper exploration of how gender, role hierarchy, and cultural norms shape the experience and response to workplace stress.

Ultimately, this dissertation does not just uncover a problem; it issues a call to action. The findings strongly argue that managing workplace stress must no longer be treated as an HR checkbox or a wellness week initiative. It must be embedded into the DNA of organizational strategy. Mental health programs, sleep education, flexible schedules, digital detox policies, and empathetic leadership are not optional luxuries—they are essential investments in the long-term sustainability of both employee well-being and institutional success.

It is time for organizations to recognize that employees are not merely economic units of labour, but humans with minds that tire, hearts that feel, and lives beyond their job roles. They need sleep, emotional safety, meaningful engagement, and balance. They need leaders who see beyond spreadsheets and understand the power of presence, empathy, and restoration. Because only when organizations nourish the people who work for them can they truly thrive in a competitive, ever-changing world.

The contributions of this dissertation extend beyond academic dialogue they aim to inspire real transformation. By integrating empirical data with global insights, it provides a roadmap for how workplaces can evolve into not just productive environments, but humane ones. Environments where stress is managed, not ignored; where well-being is prioritized, not postponed; and where success is defined not just by output, but by the flourishing of the people who make that output possible.

As the future of work continues to be reshaped by technology, remote dynamics, and global uncertainty, this research stands as a timely reminder: no strategy can succeed without people, and no people can succeed without care.

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ANNEXURES

QUESTIONNAIRE

Title: Workplace Stress: Assessing Its Influence on Sleep Patterns, Psychological Health and Cognitive Performance Among Corporate Employees

Informed Consent for Participation

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in this research study designed to investigate how workplace stress affects sleep patterns, psychological well-being, and cognitive performance among employees. The purpose of this study is to better understand the relationship between stress and various work related outcomes, with the aim of developing better support systems and stress management strategies.

Confidentiality & Voluntary Participation

- Your participation in this survey is **completely voluntary**.
- All responses will be **kept strictly confidential** and used only for research purposes.
- The data will be analysed in an aggregated form to ensure anonymity.

By proceeding and submitting this form, you consent to participate in this study.

By participating in this study, you will contribute to research that evaluates influence of workplace stress on sleep pattern, psychological health and cognitive performance among employees. This may help in designing better interventions to improve the situation.

Section 1: Demographic and Work Background

1. What is your age group?
 - 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55 & above
2. What is your Gender ?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not say
3. Organization Type
 - Government
 - Private

- Startup
 - NGO
 - Others
- 4. Years of Professional Experience
 - Less than 1 year
 - 1-3 Years
 - 3-5 Years
 - 5-10 Years
 - More than 10 years
- 5. Average hours of Working
 - Less than 6 hours
 - 6-8 Hours
 - 8-10 Hours
 - More than 10 hours

SECTION 2- STRESS LEVELS IN WORKPLACE

- 6. I often feel overloaded with my work responsibilities
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
- 7. I feel emotionally drained at the end of the workday
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree
- 8. I am expected to complete too many tasks within a limited timeframe
 - Strongly Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly Agree

9. When I am under workplace stress, I find it difficult to make clear decisions.
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
10. I am expected to be constantly available for work related communications(email, phone, etc) outside of work hours.
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree

SECTION 3: SLEEP PATTERN AND STRESS

11. I get 6-8 hours of sleep on workdays
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
12. Workplace stress has negatively affected my sleep pattern
- ☐ Strongly Disagree
 - ☐ Disagree
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Agree
 - ☐ Strongly Agree
13. Due to workplace stress , I experience the following sleep disturbances:
- I find it difficult to fall asleep
 - I tend to wake up earlier than intended.
 - I use mobile devices or screens late into the night due to work.
 - I rely on caffeine during the day to stay awake
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

14. I rely on sleep aids (medications, herbal supplements etc) due to stress?

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

15. My sleep quality worsens when my workload increases.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

SECTION 4: PSYCHOLOGICAL & EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF STRESS

16. I feel mentally exhausted after my workday.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. I feel stress has affected my relationships many a times with family, friends or colleagues?

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

18. I avoid interacting with co-workers when I am feeling stressed.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

SECTION5: COGNITIVE PERFORMANCE AT WORK

19. I have trouble focusing on work tasks when I am under stress.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

20. I struggle to recall important work related information or instructions during stressful periods.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

21. I believe my creativity and innovative thinking are negatively affected by workplace stress.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree