



Research Article

Employee Stress Management in Hybrid Work Environments: A Study of Emerging Challenges, Causes, and Organizational Coping Strategies

Anjana Rajendra Purohit ^{1*}, Dr. Rahul Kumar ²

¹ Research Scholar, Commerce and Management, Nirwan University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

² Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce and Management, Nirwan University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

Corresponding Author: * Anjana Rajendra Purohit

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20770294>

Abstract

The widespread adoption of hybrid work arrangements following the COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally reshaped the psychological and organisational landscape of contemporary employment. While hybrid work offers employees greater autonomy, reduced commuting burden, and improved scheduling flexibility, emerging evidence indicates that it has generated new and persistent sources of occupational stress, including digital fatigue, blurred work-life boundaries, social isolation, and the erosion of organisational trust through invasive monitoring practices. This paper presents a comprehensive review and synthesis of recent empirical and survey-based research, drawing on data from Gallup, Deloitte, ADP Research Institute, YourDOST, HCL Healthcare, and peer-reviewed academic journals, to examine the prevalence, causes, and consequences of stress in hybrid work settings, with particular attention to the Indian organisational context. Using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model as a theoretical framework, the study identifies workload intensification, communication breakdowns, job insecurity, and always-on digital culture as the dominant stressors, while highlighting managerial support, autonomy, and structured well-being interventions as the most effective buffering resources. The paper further presents visual data analysis through charts depicting comparative stress levels, leading causal factors, and India-specific indicators of workplace mental health. The paper concludes with a discussion of practical, evidence-based stress management strategies for organisations navigating the hybrid work era, including flexible scheduling policies, mental health infrastructure, manager training, and the institutionalisation of the right to disconnect.

Manuscript Information

- ISSN No: 2583-7397
- Received: 12-05-2026
- Accepted: 16-06-2026
- Published: 20-06-2026
- IJCRM:5(3); 2026: 1016-1022
- ©2026, All Rights Reserved
- Plagiarism Checked: Yes
- Peer Review Process: Yes

How to Cite this Article

Purohit A R, Kumar R. Employee Stress Management in Hybrid Work Environments: A Study of Emerging Challenges, Causes, and Organizational Coping Strategies. Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip. 2026;5(3):1016-1022.

Access this Article Online



www.multiarticlesjournal.com

KEYWORDS: Hybrid work, employee stress, occupational burnout, work-life balance, digital fatigue, Job Demands-Resources model, organisational well-being, mental health at work.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global workplace has undergone an unprecedented structural transformation since 2020, with hybrid work — an arrangement combining remote and in-office work — emerging as the dominant operating model across knowledge-intensive industries. What began as an emergency public health response has evolved into a permanent feature of organisational design, with millions of employees worldwide now dividing their working time between home and office environments. This shift has been widely celebrated for the flexibility, autonomy, and improved work-life integration it affords employees. However, a growing body of research suggests that hybrid work has not eliminated occupational stress; rather, it has transformed its character, introducing new psychosocial risks that did not exist, or existed only marginally, in traditional office-based employment.

Stress arising from hybrid work manifests through several interconnected channels: the blurring of boundaries between professional and personal life, the cognitive burden of constant digital connectivity, feelings of isolation from reduced face-to-face interaction, anxiety over visibility and career advancement, and the intensification of surveillance through employee monitoring software. At the same time, employees who continue to work primarily in-office report comparatively higher stress levels than their hybrid or remote counterparts, suggesting that the relationship between work location and psychological well-being is complex and mediated by organisational culture, managerial trust, and job design rather than physical location alone.

In the Indian context, this issue carries particular urgency. India has been identified among the most stressed working populations globally, with South Asia recording the lowest proportion of "thriving" employees and the highest levels of daily workplace anger and stress relative to other world regions. The economic cost of this crisis is substantial, with poor employee mental health estimated to cost Indian employers approximately ₹1.1 lakh crore annually through reduced productivity, absenteeism, and turnover. Given India's rapidly expanding services and technology sectors — both heavy adopters of hybrid work models — understanding the drivers of hybrid work stress and identifying effective management strategies has become a pressing priority for both academic researchers and human resource practitioners.

This paper aims to (a) review and synthesise recent authentic data on the prevalence and causes of stress in hybrid work environments, (b) examine the theoretical underpinnings of occupational stress using the Job Demands-Resources model, (c) present visual and statistical analysis of global and India-specific stress indicators, and (d) propose evidence-based organisational strategies for managing employee stress in hybrid settings.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the prevalence and intensity of employee stress across in-office, hybrid, and fully remote work arrangements.
2. To identify the principal causes of stress experienced by employees in hybrid work environments.

3. To analyse the specific manifestation of workplace stress within the Indian employment context.
4. To review the theoretical frameworks, particularly the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, relevant to understanding hybrid work stress.
5. To propose practical, evidence-based stress management strategies for organisations operating hybrid work models.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design based on secondary data collected from authentic, verifiable sources. Data have been drawn from large-scale global workplace surveys (Gallup State of the Global Workplace Report 2025; the State of Hybrid Work Report 2025; OfficeRnD and Springworks compiled workplace statistics), India-specific employer and wellness platform surveys (ADP Research Institute People at Work 2025; YourDOST Emotional Wellness State of Employees Report 2024; HCL Healthcare Corporate Wellness Report; Deloitte Mental Health and Well-Being in the Workplace survey; British Safety Council Women @ Work 2024), and peer-reviewed academic journal articles indexed in Scopus, ResearchGate, and PubMed Central. The selected sources span the period 2022 to 2026 to ensure currency and relevance to the present hybrid work landscape. Quantitative statistics extracted from these sources have been compiled, compared, and represented visually through bar charts and a pie chart to facilitate interpretation. The study does not involve primary data collection through questionnaires or interviews; rather, it synthesises existing authentic empirical findings to construct a comprehensive and current understanding of the subject.

4. Theoretical Framework: The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, originally developed by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli, provides the most widely applied theoretical lens for understanding occupational stress in contemporary research, including studies specific to hybrid and remote work contexts. The model proposes that every occupation carries two broad categories of characteristics: job demands and job resources.

Job demands refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of work that require sustained effort and are therefore associated with physiological and psychological costs. In hybrid work, these include excessive workload, the expectation of constant digital availability, ambiguous performance expectations, and the cognitive load of switching between physical and virtual work contexts.

Job resources are those aspects of work that help employees achieve goals, reduce the psychological cost of job demands, and stimulate growth. In hybrid settings, key resources include managerial trust and support, autonomy over scheduling, clear communication structures, and access to organisational mental health support.

According to the model, strain and burnout occur when job demands chronically exceed available resources, while engagement and well-being flourish when sufficient resources are present to offset demands. This framework is particularly

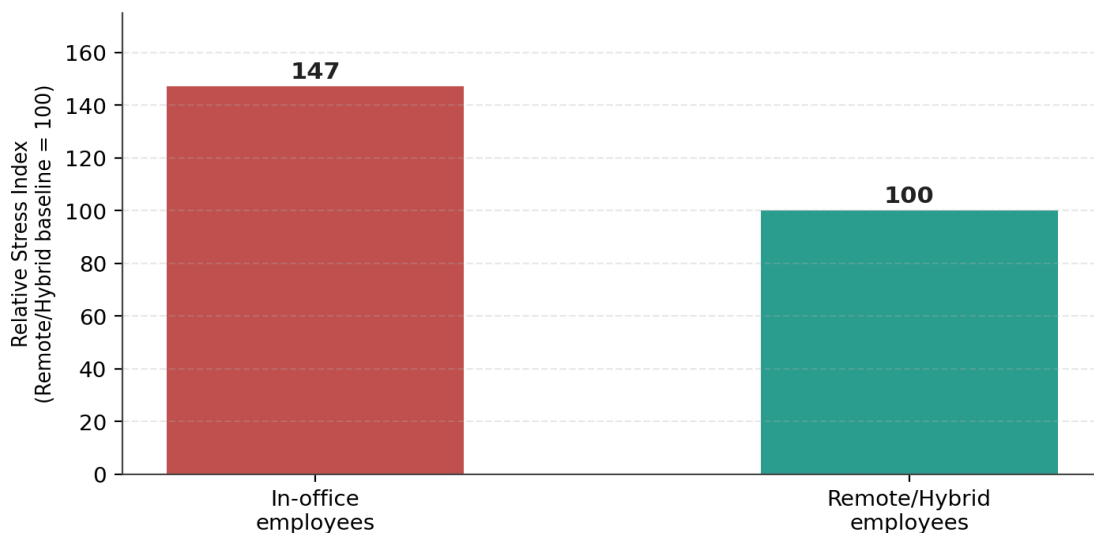
well-suited to the study of hybrid work because it accommodates the dual-sided nature of flexible work arrangements: hybrid work can simultaneously function as a resource (through autonomy and reduced commuting strain) and as a source of demand (through digital fatigue and boundary erosion), depending on how it is implemented and managed by the organisation. Complementing the JD-R model, the present study also draws on the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, which emphasises that stress arises from an employee's subjective appraisal of whether workplace demands exceed their perceived coping resources, underscoring the importance of individual and organisational coping mechanisms in stress management interventions.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Stress Levels Across Work Arrangements

Contrary to the common assumption that remote or hybrid work universally reduces stress, recent data reveal a more nuanced picture. Survey findings from the 2025 State of Hybrid Work Report indicate that in-office employees report 47% higher stress levels than their remote counterparts, with women and millennial employees experiencing the sharpest increases in workplace anxiety. Notably, the same report found that 89% of employees observed no meaningful improvement in their work-related anxiety despite the wider availability of flexible arrangements, suggesting that flexibility alone, without accompanying cultural and managerial change, is insufficient to resolve the underlying drivers of stress.

Figure 1: Relative Work-Related Stress – In-Office vs Remote/Hybrid Employees



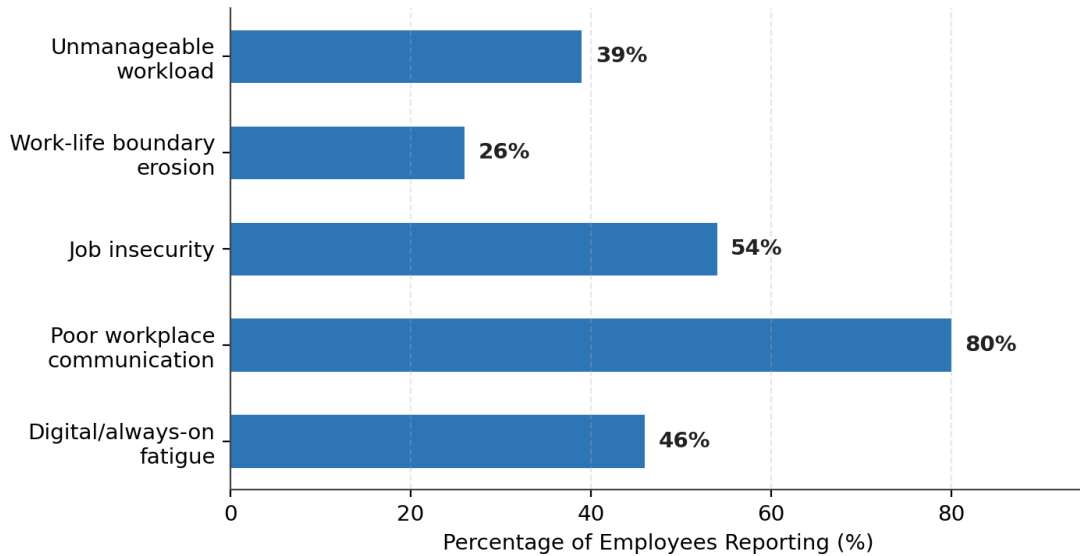
Note: Index is illustrative, constructed from the reported finding that in-office employees experience 47% higher stress than remote/hybrid employees.
Source: BenefitsPRO, State of Hybrid Work Report (2025)

A contributing factor to elevated stress among in-office employees is the increasing use of employee monitoring and tracking software, which nearly half (46%) of surveyed employees reported their organisations had introduced or expanded in the past year. This trend has coincided with declining organisational trust, with a substantial majority of employees expressing the view that employers should be legally required to disclose monitoring practices.

5.2 Leading Causes of Hybrid Work Stress

Synthesis of multiple workplace stress studies identifies five consistently cited drivers of stress in hybrid and remote work environments: poor workplace communication, job insecurity, digital and always-on fatigue, unmanageable workload, and the erosion of work-life boundaries. Poor communication emerges as the most pervasive concern, cited by 80% of employees, reflecting the structural challenge of maintaining clarity, alignment, and psychological safety across distributed and asynchronous teams.

Figure 2: Leading Causes of Stress Among Hybrid and Remote Employees



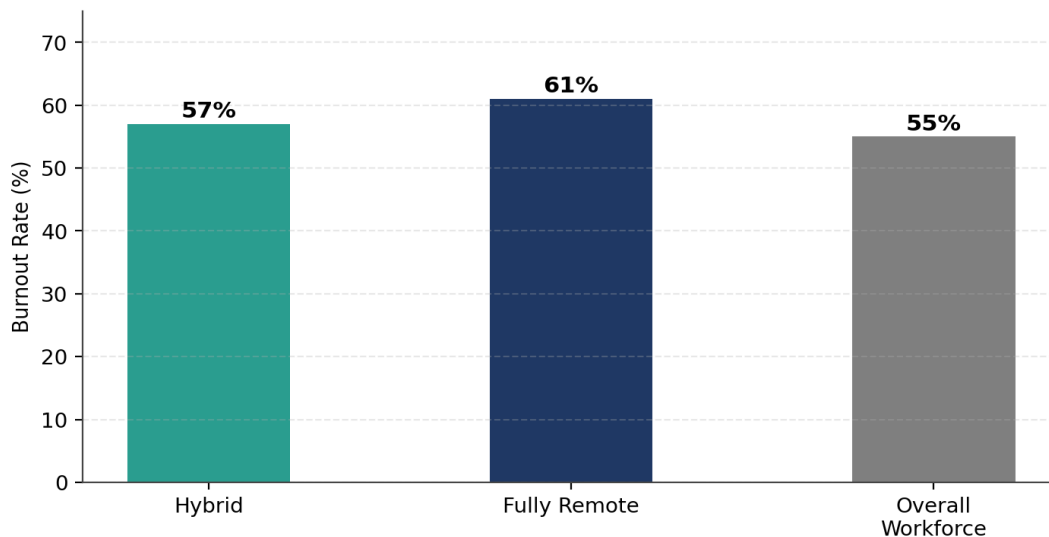
Source: Springworks Workplace Stress Statistics (2025–26); Gallup Global Workplace Report (2024)

Academic literature corroborates these survey findings. Research examining burnout in hybrid environments identifies long working hours, the blurring of boundaries between professional and personal time, social isolation arising from reduced face-to-face contact, and the expectation of perpetual digital availability as central mechanisms driving employee exhaustion. A bibliometric and narrative review of remote and hybrid work literature similarly concludes that while hybrid arrangements reduce certain traditional stressors, such as commuting burden, they simultaneously intensify emotional strain when digital demands increase, particularly in the absence of organisational strategies such as autonomy-enhancing policies and virtual peer support structures.

5.3 Burnout Patterns by Work Mode

Burnout, defined as a state of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment arising from chronic occupational stress, shows a distinct gradient across work arrangements. Fully remote employees report the highest burnout rate at 61%, compared to 57% among hybrid workers and 55% across the overall workforce, indicating that physical isolation — even in the absence of commuting and in-office pressures — carries its own significant psychological cost. This finding is critical for organisational policy, as it challenges the assumption that maximising remote work automatically minimises employee strain.

Figure 5: Reported Burnout Rates by Work Mode



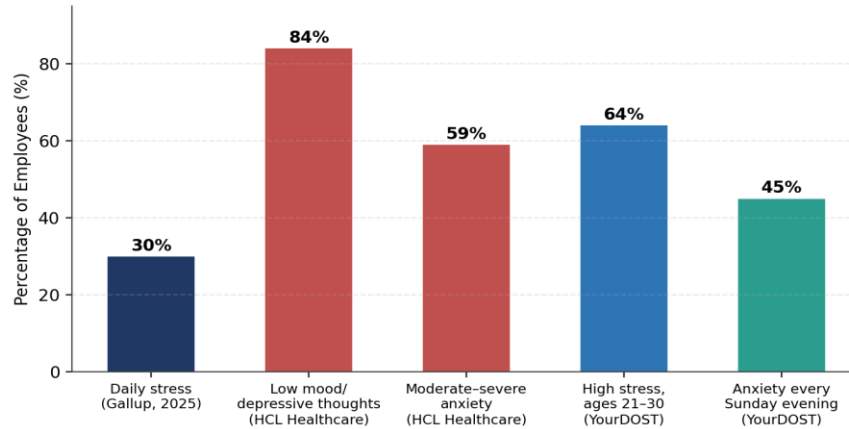
Source: Springworks Workplace Stress Statistics Report (2025–26)

5.4 The Indian Context

Workplace stress in India presents a particularly acute profile relative to global benchmarks. According to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace 2025 Report, South Asia — comprising India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan — records the world's lowest percentage of thriving employees

alongside the highest levels of daily anger and stress among workers globally. Within India specifically, 30% of employees report experiencing daily stress at work, while 34% report regular feelings of anger, indicators that Gallup attributes to high workloads, insufficient managerial support, and uninspiring work environments.

Figure 3: Indicators of Workplace Stress Among Indian Employees



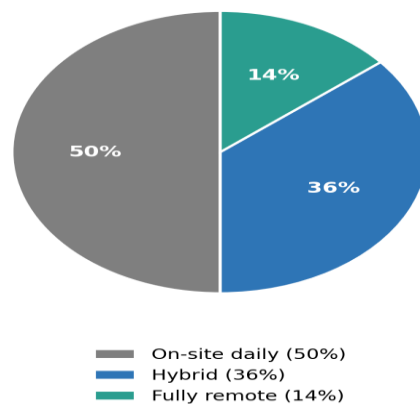
Source: Gallup State of the Global Workplace Report (2025); YourDOST Emotional Wellness Report (2024); HCL Healthcare Corporate Wellness Report (2024-25)

Industry-specific wellness data deepens this picture. The HCL Healthcare Corporate Wellness Report finds that 84% of corporate employees in India report low mood or depressive thoughts, while 59% display signs of moderate to severe anxiety. The YourDOST Emotional Wellness State of Employees Report similarly found that 64% of employees aged 21 to 30 are experiencing high stress levels, with over 45% of employees reporting anxiety specifically on Sunday evenings in anticipation of the upcoming work week — a phenomenon often termed "Sunday scaries" in occupational psychology literature. These findings collectively point to a workforce under sustained psychological strain, with younger employees and women disproportionately affected; a separate British study.

Safety Council study found that 72.2% of female employees in India reported high stress levels compared to 53.6% of male employees, with poor work-life balance identified as a leading contributing factor.

Organisational engagement data reinforces the severity of the issue: ADP Research Institute's People at Work 2025 report found that workforce engagement in India fell to 19% in 2025, down from 24% the previous year, marking the steepest engagement decline recorded globally. Despite this, India also reports comparatively high rates of location autonomy, with 45% of employees reporting full control over where they work, the second-highest rate globally after Egypt, suggesting that flexibility in work location alone has not been sufficient to offset deeper drivers of disengagement and stress.

Figure 4: Distribution of Work Arrangements Among Indian Employees (2025)



Source: ADP Research Institute, People at Work 2025 Report

The financial implications of this crisis are considerable. Deloitte's Mental Health and Well-Being in the Workplace survey estimates that poor employee mental health costs Indian employers approximately ₹1.1 lakh crore (around USD 14 billion) annually, with presenteeism — employees being physically present but functioning at reduced productivity due to stress — accounting for an estimated ₹51,000 crore of this total. This economic dimension underscores that employee stress is not solely a matter of individual welfare but a material organisational and macroeconomic concern.

6. Organisational Strategies for Stress Management

Drawing on the JD-R framework and the empirical findings reviewed above, effective stress management in hybrid work environments requires organisations to simultaneously reduce excessive job demands and strengthen available job resources. The following evidence-informed strategies emerge as priorities:

- **Manager capability building:** Since management quality is repeatedly identified as the single most powerful lever for stress reduction, organisations should invest in training managers to provide psychological safety, constructive feedback, and consistent communication across hybrid teams.
- **Institutionalising the right to disconnect:** Establishing formal policies that limit after-hours communication expectations directly addresses the digital fatigue and always-on culture identified as a leading stressor in hybrid environments.
- **Transparent monitoring policies:** Given employee concern over expanding surveillance software, organisations should ensure monitoring practices, where used, are transparent, proportionate, and clearly communicated to preserve organisational trust.
- **Structured mental health infrastructure:** Since only roughly half of employees know how to access employer-provided mental health support, organisations should prioritise not only the provision but the clear, repeated communication of available resources, such as employee assistance programs and counselling services.
- **Workload calibration:** As an unmanageable workload remains a primary driver of stress, organisations should implement regular workload audits and realistic deadline-setting practices, particularly for early-career employees who report disproportionately high stress from excessive workload.
- **Deliberate connection-building:** Given that fully remote employees report the highest burnout rates, organisations operating hybrid models should design intentional in-person touchpoints and virtual peer-support structures to counteract isolation without mandating full-time office return.
- **Flexible scheduling with autonomy:** Preserving meaningful employee autonomy over work location and hours, rather than rigid mandates in either direction, correlates strongly with higher engagement and lower stress, as reflected in comparative engagement data from high-autonomy markets.

7. CONCLUSION

Hybrid work has irrevocably altered the structure of employment, offering employees meaningful gains in flexibility and autonomy while simultaneously introducing a distinct constellation of occupational stressors. The evidence reviewed in this paper demonstrates that stress in hybrid work environments is neither uniformly higher nor lower than in traditional office settings; rather, its character has shifted from commute-related and presenteeism-driven strain toward digital fatigue, boundary erosion, communication breakdown, and surveillance-related distrust. The Indian employment context illustrates these dynamics with particular intensity, reflected in elevated daily stress, declining engagement, and substantial associated economic costs. Applying the Job Demands-Resources framework, this paper concludes that the resolution to hybrid work stress lies not in reversing flexible work arrangements but in deliberately strengthening organisational resources, particularly managerial support, communication clarity, and structured well-being infrastructure, to offset the heightened demands that distributed work inherently introduces. Future research employing primary, India-specific longitudinal data across diverse industry sectors would further strengthen the evidence base for context-specific hybrid work policy design.

REFERENCES

1. ADP Research Institute. India's workforce engagement plummets to 19% in 2025, defying global trends: People at Work 2025 report. ADP India; 2025. Available from: <https://in.adp.com>
2. Bakker AB, Demerouti E. Job demands-resources theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *J Occup Health Psychol.* 2017;22(3):273-285. doi:10.1037/ocp0000056.
3. BenefitsPRO. Hybrid work here to stay, but employee stress & distrust rise: State of Hybrid Work Report (8th Annual Edition). 2025 Jan 27. Available from: <https://www.benefitspro.com>
4. British Safety Council India. Indian female workers experiencing higher levels of stress than men, reveals study: Women @ Work 2024. 2024 Sep 9. Available from: <https://www.britsafe.in>
5. Deloitte. Mental health and well-being in the workplace: India survey findings. Deloitte India; 2024.
6. Demerouti E, Bakker AB, Nachreiner F, Schaufeli WB. The job demands-resources model of burnout. *J Appl Psychol.* 2001;86(3):499-512.
7. Gallup. State of the Global Workplace 2025 report. Gallup, Inc.; 2025. Available from: <https://www.gallup.com>
8. HCL Healthcare. Corporate wellness report: Mental health indicators among Indian employees. HCL Healthcare; 2024-2025.
9. Kakaraparthi V, et al. When work moves home: Remote work, occupational stress, mental health, burnout and employee well-being—Trends and strategic roadmap. *Merits.* 2025;7(4):96. Available from: <https://www.mdpi.com/2813-9844/7/4/96>

10. OfficeRnD. 40+ insightful hybrid work statistics [2025 guide]. 2025 Feb 25. Available from: <https://www.officernd.com/blog/hybrid-work-statistics/>
11. People Manager. Alarming: Workplace stress rising among Indian young professionals—report. 2025 May 21. Available from: <https://peoplemanager.co.in>
12. SelectSoftwareReviews. 81+ troubling workplace stress statistics [Updated for 2026]. 2026 Jan 15. Available from: <https://www.selectsoftwarereviews.com/blog/workplace-stress-statistics>
13. Springworks. 40 workplace stress statistics 2025-2026: Burnout rates, causes, costs, and what HR must act on. Springworks; 2025-2026. Available from: <https://www.springworks.in/blog/workplace-stress-statistics>
14. Upstox. India's workplace stress epidemic: A silent crisis claiming lives and billions. 2025 Jul 10. Available from: <https://upstox.com>
15. YourDOST. Emotional wellness state of employees in 2024 report. YourDOST Wellness Platform; 2024.

Creative Commons (CC) License

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution–Non-Commercial–No Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) license. This license permits sharing and redistribution of the article in any medium or format for non-commercial purposes only, provided that appropriate credit is given to the original author(s) and source. No modifications, adaptations, or derivative works are permitted under this license.

About the Corresponding Author



Anjana Rajendra Purohit is a Research Scholar in the Department of Commerce and Management at Nirwan University, Jaipur. She has teaching experience at the college level and actively participates in research, conferences, seminars, and workshops. Her research papers have been published in reputed national and international journals, reflecting her commitment to academic excellence.