International Journal of Recent Development in Engineering and Technology
Website: www.ijrdet.com (ISSN 2347-6435(Online) Volume 15, Issue 02, February 2026)

# The Impact of Occupational Stress on Psychosomatic Health: A Secondary Study of Indian IT Professionals

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***Abstract*-- Occupational stress has become a significant concern in India's rapidly expanding Information Technology (IT) sector, where demanding workloads, tight deadlines, global client pressures, and constant technological engagement shape the everyday work experience. This secondary research study synthesizes existing literature from 2014–2025 to examine how persistent workplace stress translates into psychosomatic health complaints among IT professionals.**

**Findings from multiple cross-sectional studies reveal consistently high levels of perceived stress, frequently accompanied by headaches, fatigue, sleep disturbances, musculoskeletal pain, and digestive issues. The review also highlights the growing impact of post-pandemic work cultures—such as extended work-from-home arrangements, blurred work–life boundaries, and technology overload—on both stress levels and physical wellbeing.**

**The study further identifies critical workplace factors that intensify psychosomatic risks, including prolonged screen time, sedentary work habits, irregular sleep schedules, and organizational cultures that prioritize productivity over wellbeing. Synthesized evidence shows that occupational stress, lifestyle factors, and environmental conditions interact to create a feedback loop of chronic strain and deteriorating health. Occupational stress among IT employees commonly arises from workload intensity, constant deadlines, role ambiguity, job insecurity, and the expectation of continuous upskilling. The study highlights how these stressors not only affect emotional states—such as anxiety, burnout, and irritability—but also contribute to physiological strain. Insights from past studies show that prolonged exposure to these conditions can create a cumulative stress load that activates biological pathways associated with chronic fatigue and weakened immunity, suggesting a clear link between work pressures and declining psychosomatic health.**

**The study concludes that psychosomatic manifestations are not isolated incidents but systemic outcomes of how work is structured in the IT sector. These insights underscore the need for targeted organizational interventions such as ergonomic redesign, stress-management programs, mental-health support, and policies that safeguard work–life balance to promote sustainable employee health.**

***Keywords*-- Occupational stress; Psychosomatic health; Indian IT professionals; Technostress; Work–life balance; Secondary research; Employee wellbeing**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Occupational stress has emerged as one of the most prominent concerns in contemporary workplaces, especially within high-pressure, technology-driven sectors. The rapid growth of India's Information Technology (IT) industry has transformed work structures, creating a competitive environment characterized by tight deadlines, demanding clients, continuous upskilling, and extended working hours. As IT professionals navigate these pressures, stress has increasingly become a defining element of their work experience. This stress does not remain confined to emotional or psychological boundaries but often manifests physically, resulting in psychosomatic symptoms that affect every day functioning.

Psychosomatic health refers to physical symptoms that arise or worsen due to psychological factors such as stress, anxiety, and emotional strain. Common manifestations include headaches, fatigue, digestive issues, musculoskeletal pain, and sleep disturbances. For IT professionals, prolonged screen time, sedentary work habits, and a culture of constant availability can aggravate these symptoms, further intensifying the cycle of stress and reduced wellbeing. Recognizing these physical consequences is crucial for understanding the holistic impact of workplace stress in the Indian IT sector.

In the Indian context, the IT industry has been celebrated as a major driver of economic growth, job creation, and global competitiveness. However, this success has been accompanied by challenges that are often underreported—chief among them is the rise of work-induced stress and its impact on employee health. The combination of client-driven demands, project-based workloads, and the pressure to consistently deliver high-quality output makes occupational stress an inherent occupational hazard for IT workers.

A secondary study on this topic becomes particularly valuable because it synthesizes existing research findings to identify shared patterns, gaps, and emerging concerns. By examining previously published data, reports, and empirical studies, this research can provide deeper insights into how widespread psychosomatic issues have become, how they vary across job roles, and what factors contribute most significantly to stress in the Indian IT environment.

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Ultimately, such an inquiry helps build a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between occupational stress and psychosomatic health, offering meaningful implications for policymakers, organizations, and the workforce.

*1.1 Significance of study:*

This study is significant because it highlights an urgent health concern affecting one of India's largest and fastest-growing professional sectors. While IT professionals contribute substantially to the national economy, the personal cost in terms of stress-related health problems often goes unnoticed. By focusing on psychosomatic outcomes, the study emphasizes the need to view employee health beyond mere productivity metrics.

The findings of this secondary research can guide organizations in recognizing the hidden burden of stress and taking proactive measures. Understanding stress-induced physical symptoms enables companies to design targeted interventions such as wellness programs, ergonomic improvements, mental health support, and workload management strategies. These initiatives not only improve employee wellbeing but also enhance retention and organizational performance.

Furthermore, the study contributes to academic literature by consolidating existing evidence on occupational stress within the Indian IT industry—a field where empirical research is growing but still limited. The insights generated can inform future primary research, policy development, and organizational best practices, ultimately promoting healthier and more sustainable work environments.

## II. Objective Of Study

1. To examine the relationship between occupational stress and psychosomatic health symptoms among Indian IT professionals using secondary data.
2. To identify key workplace stressors that contribute to psychosomatic complaints in the IT sector.
3. To highlight trends, gaps, and implications from existing studies to inform organizational and policy-level intervention.

## III. Literature Review

Madhura, Subramanya & Balaram (2014) reported a clear relationship between job stress, job satisfaction, and psychosomatic health among software professionals in Bengaluru.

Their cross-sectional survey (n ≈ 141) found that higher perceived job stress correlated with more psychosomatic complaints (headache, back pain, sleep problems), while those practicing yoga reported lower stress and fewer psychosomatic symptoms — suggesting both the strength of the stress–health link and the potential buffering effect of stress-management practices. (Madhura et al., 2014).

Padma et al. (2015) examined health problems and stress in IT and BPO employees and documented a high prevalence of work-related physical complaints (musculoskeletal pain, eye strain, gastrointestinal complaints) tied to long hours, shift work, and sedentary computer-based tasks. The study emphasized occupational and ergonomic contributors to psychosomatic symptoms in Indian IT/BPO contexts and recommended workplace health promotion and ergonomic interventions. (Padma, 2015).

A community-based cross-sectional study of software professionals in Hyderabad (Thomas et al., 2019) found moderate-to-high levels of perceived stress in a large sample and reported significant associations between stress levels and demographic/work variables (age, gender, working hours). The study highlighted that time pressure, unrealistic expectations, and extended computer use are common stressors that map onto psychosomatic complaints in this population. (Thomas et al., 2019).

More recent Indian evidence highlights how post-COVID changes (WFH, blurred boundaries) altered stress and psychosomatic risk. A 2025 cross-sectional survey of IT professionals working from home in Tamil Nadu observed substantially elevated rates of stress, anxiety, and sleep/psychosomatic disturbances linked to poor work-home separation and home distractions — underlining the evolving nature of occupational stressors for IT workers. (Abinesh et al., 2025).

International literature synthesizes mechanisms connecting job stress, burnout, and somatic outcomes. Koutsimani et al. (2019) performed a systematic review/meta-analysis linking burnout, depression, and anxiety; their conceptual framing (burnout as chronic workplace stress response) helps explain why prolonged occupational stress often manifests as psychosomatic complaints and reduced functioning among professionals. This theoretical evidence strengthens interpretation of Indian empirical findings by situating psychosomatic symptoms within established stress–burnout pathways. (Koutsimani et al., 2019).

Epidemiological and screening studies (e.g., Trivedi, 2024) add that prevalence estimates vary by context — with some recent surveys of Indian IT workers reporting notable proportions experiencing clinically relevant work-stress and associated somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, digestive problems, insomnia) — reinforcing the public-health significance of occupational stress in this sector. (Trivedi, 2024).

Kurian et al. (2023) examined perceived stress and fatigue in software developers and found clear links between prolonged cognitive workload, fatigue, and reduced physical wellbeing (sleep problems, headaches, musculoskeletal complaints). The authors showed that fatigue mediated the relationship between workload and somatic complaints, suggesting that interventions which reduce sustained cognitive load (break scheduling, micro-rests) can lower psychosomatic symptoms. (Kurian, 2023).

Kumaresan (2022) studied burnout prevalence among IT professionals working from home during the COVID-19 period and reported very high rates of burnout and related psychosomatic complaints (sleep disturbance, headaches, digestive issues). The paper emphasized blurred work–home boundaries and extended online availability as key drivers that converted psychological stress into somatic symptoms, highlighting the need for organizational policies on work hours and psychosocial support. (Kumaresan, 2022).

Kumar (2024) provided a comprehensive review of "technostress" in modern workplaces and linked constant digital connectivity and technology overload to elevated stress markers and somatic outcomes (eye strain, headaches, neck/back pain). The review synthesised several empirical Indian studies and argued that technostress acts both as a direct ergonomic risk and as a psychological stressor that produces psychosomatic manifestations. (Kumar, 2024).

Akhila (2021) conducted a targeted study on job stress during work-from-home for IT employees and found increased reports of anxiety, disrupted sleep, and somatic complaints compared with pre-pandemic samples. The study's data linked poor home-work boundary management and household distractions with the emergence or worsening of physical symptoms commonly attributed to psychosomatic stress. (Akhila, 2021).

Meenambigai& Saranya Devi (2023) surveyed mental-health and employee needs in selected Indian IT organizations and documented that employees experiencing high perceived stress reported more frequent somatic complaints (fatigue, headaches, digestive problems).

Their findings recommend institutionalizing mental-health screening and low-intensity physical-health interventions (ergonomics, scheduled breaks) to reduce psychosomatic load. (Meenambigai& Saranya Devi, 2023).

An IJIP (2023) empirical study of software professionals reported significant relationships between burnout, poor work–life balance, and somatic problems (sleep disturbance, chronic fatigue, musculoskeletal pain). The authors emphasised that job-role ambiguity and long working hours were the strongest predictors of both psychological burnout and accompanying psychosomatic symptoms in software employees. (IJIP, 2023).

Trivedi (2024) measured levels of work stress among IT professionals during and after the COVID-19 era and found a measurable prevalence of clinically significant work stress (~17.7%) with correspondingly elevated reports of psychosomatic complaints. The study highlighted demographic differentials (higher prevalence in older and female employees) and reinforced that occupational stress continues to translate into physical health complaints in the IT workforce. (Trivedi, 2024).

## IV. Methodology

### *4.1 Research Design:*

This study adopts a secondary research design, relying entirely on existing literature, previously published empirical studies, organizational reports, and scholarly articles related to occupational stress and psychosomatic health among Indian IT professionals. A secondary study is appropriate for this topic because it enables synthesis of diverse findings, comparison of trends, and identification of consistent patterns across multiple contexts without primary data collection. The design is largely descriptive and analytical, focusing on summarizing previous research and evaluating the relationships reported between occupational stressors and psychosomatic outcomes.

### *4.2 Research Approach:*

A qualitative and evidence-synthesis approach was used. Rather than conducting statistical tests on raw data, the study reviews, categorizes, and interprets findings from credible sources to generate thematic insights. The approach supports understanding how workplace pressures, technological demands, and organizational factors contribute to stress-induced physical symptoms. Narrative synthesis was used to combine findings from both Indian and international studies.

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*4.3 Data Source:*

The study uses secondary data from the following types of sources:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2014–2025
- Government or institutional reports relating to occupational health
- Publications focusing on the Indian IT sector
- Cross-sectional and survey-based studies examining stress and psychosomatic symptoms
- Review papers on technostress, burnout, and psychosomatic health
- Open-access databases such as PubMed, ResearchGate, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, and journal repositories

*4.4 Ethical Considerations*:

As the study uses secondary data, no human participants were directly involved. All sources used are publicly accessible or ethically published materials. Proper citations and referencing are maintained throughout to ensure academic integrity and avoid plagiarism.

## V. Data Analysis And Interpretation

*5.1 Data Analysis*:

*5.1.1 Nature and Sources of Occupational Stress in the Indian IT Sector:*

Occupational stress in the Indian IT sector emerges from multiple intertwined professional pressures. A major cross-sectional study of 356 IT professionals (2020–2021) reported a 17.7% prevalence of overall work stress, with over 80% experiencing deadline pressure, long working hours, frequent multitasking, and poor work–life balance. A 2024 national-level survey further highlighted that 43% of Indian tech professionals reported work-related health concerns, with more than half working an average of 52.5 hours per week—significantly above the national average of 47.7. A Pune study (2023) found that 67% of IT employees experienced high stress, while only 6.7% engaged in regular physical activity. Irregular sleep cycles and heavy late-night device use were also prevalent, indicating behavioural contributors to stress. Overall, the data shows that workload pressure, extended work hours, multitasking, and job insecurity are the most common stressors.

*5.1.2 Psychosomatic Manifestations of Work-Related Stress:*

The data illustrates that psychosomatic symptoms are widely reported among IT professionals experiencing stress. The 2024 Onsurity/KCCI study shows high occurrences of headaches, back and neck pain, muscle stiffness, eye strain, digestive issues, and weight gain. Around 55% reported that late working hours significantly impacted their health. The 2023 Pune study reported 41% with high BMI, 56.3% physically inactive, and 37.5% with irregular sleep patterns. Additionally, 89.5% used electronic devices before bed, contributing to sleep disturbances. Older research from South India also found a significant association between occupational stress and poor oral health (high DMFT scores).These findings demonstrate that occupational stress has broad physical manifestations across multiple body systems.

*5.1.3 Workplace Environment and Technology Overload:*

Extended working hours and technology-heavy tasks contribute significantly to stress. Professionals working an average of 52.5 hours per week experience prolonged screen time, disrupted sleep, and reduced physical activity.Sedentary behaviour is widespread—only 6.7% of Pune-based IT professionals reported regular physical activity, while 56.3% were largely inactive. 41% had high BMI, indicating possible metabolic concerns.Poor sleep hygiene is another pattern: 37.5% had irregular sleep schedules and 89.5% used devices before sleep. These factors increase fatigue, headaches, and cognitive strain.Organisational culture, including performance expectations, continuous digital connectivity, and lack of support, further intensifies stress.

*5.1.4 Interplay Between Stressors, Environment, and Health Outcomes:*

The data reveals a cycle where stressors such as workload, job insecurity, and multitasking combine with environmental factors like sedentary behaviour, poor sleep, and extended screen time.

This interplay leads to widespread psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches, back pain, sleep disturbances, digestive issues, and weight gain. The cumulative effect creates a feedback loop: stress leads to unhealthy behaviours and physical symptoms, and those symptoms reduce resilience, making professionals more vulnerable to further stress.

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*5.1.5 Limitations in the Data:*

- Heavy reliance on self-reported questionnaires rather than clinical measurements.
- Variability in sample sizes limits full generalizability.
- Lifestyle and contextual factors (diet, commuting, socio-economic status) are often not controlled.
- Limited longitudinal studies reduce clarity on long-term effects.

*5.2 Data Interpretation:*

*5.2.1 Interpretation of Occupational Stress Patterns:*

The widespread stress levels indicate that IT work environments systematically produce psychological pressure. Stress is not episodic but embedded within organisational structures, showing systemic issues rather than individual coping failures. The high-stress prevalence across locations (Bengaluru, Pune, national surveys) demonstrates industry-wide uniformity.

*5.2.2 Interpretation of Psychosomatic Outcomes:*

The high rates of symptoms such as back pain, headaches, digestive issues, and sleep problems suggest a strong mind–body interaction where psychological stress translates into physical health issues. Behavioural patterns—such as inactivity, device overuse, and irregular sleep—mediate this conversion, increasing health risks like obesity and musculoskeletal disorders.

*5.2.3 Interpretation of Environmental and Technological Factors:*

The data clearly indicates that prolonged screen exposure, sedentary work, limited movement, and "always-on" digital culture worsen both stress and physical symptoms. The tech-driven work style produces biological strain by disrupting circadian rhythms, impairing recovery, and encouraging unhealthy routines.

*5.2.4 Interpretation of Interplay Between Stress, Environment, and Health:*

Stressors, poor lifestyle patterns, and environmental constraints interact to create a reinforcing cycle of physical and psychological deterioration. For example:

- Stress → poor sleep → fatigue → reduced productivity → increased stress.
- Sedentary work → musculoskeletal pain → decreased activity → worsening health → higher stress. This cyclical pattern explains why chronic stress is prevalent across the sector.

## VI. Results And Discussion

*1. Summary of Observed Patterns:*

The collective analysis reveals that occupational stress is endemic within the Indian IT sector. High job demands, frequent multitasking, tight deadlines, and extended working hours consistently surface as the primary stressors. These factors are deeply embedded into organizational workflows, suggesting structural rather than temporary issues.

The prevalence of psychosomatic symptoms across studies highlights the tangible impact of stress on physical health. Musculoskeletal pain, sleep disturbances, headaches, and weight gain are recurrently documented, demonstrating that stress in IT workplaces manifests far beyond psychological discomfort.

*2. Discussion in Relation to Workplace Environment:*

The data suggests that workplace design, culture, and technology intensity are major determinants of stress levels. Sedentary roles, long periods of screen exposure, and insufficient ergonomic support contribute to chronic fatigue, musculoskeletal disorders, and reduced overall wellbeing. Organizational norms such as expectations for continuous learning, responsiveness outside traditional working hours, and constant digital availability—create an "always-on" work culture. These pressures not only heighten psychological exhaustion but also disrupt sleep hygiene, impairing recovery and increasing vulnerability to illness.

*3. Association Between Stress and Psychosomatic Health:*

A clear, positive association exists between occupational stress levels and psychosomatic health outcomes. Higher stress correlates with more frequent headaches, gastrointestinal problems, sleep disturbances, and musculoskeletal discomfort. Poor lifestyle habits—physical inactivity, improper diet, and poor sleep hygiene—act as mediating variables that convert psychological distress into physical symptoms. Technology overload intensifies these effects, with prolonged screen time linked to eye strain, sleep disturbances, and reduced physical movement. This convergence explains why IT workers report a wide spectrum of psychosomatic symptoms despite relatively young average age groups.

*4. Implications for Indian IT Organizations:*

Findings suggest an urgent need for comprehensive wellness initiatives. Interventions may include:

- Flexible working hours and workload redistribution
- Mandatory breaks and ergonomic workplace redesign
- Programs promoting physical activity and sleep hygiene
- Stress-management training and mental-health support
- Reducing digital overload by regulating off-hour communication expectations

Organizations adopting such practices may experience improved employee wellbeing, reduced turnover, and enhanced productivity.

## VII. Conclusion And Recommendations:

*1. Conclusion:*

The analysis clearly indicates that occupational stress is a critical concern in the Indian IT sector, affecting employees at multiple levels. The nature of IT work—characterized by rapid project cycles, reliance on global clients, and high expectations for performance—creates an environment where stress is not only common but often normalized. This continuous exposure to high-pressure conditions contributes to persistent mental strain among employees.

A significant outcome of this heightened stress is the emergence of psychosomatic health issues. Physical complaints such as headaches, musculoskeletal pain, digestive problems, and chronic fatigue appear frequently across studies. These symptoms highlight the deep interconnection between psychological stressors and physiological responses. The evidence suggests that prolonged and unmanaged stress can escalate into chronic health complications if left unaddressed.

Technological demands further compound these challenges. The sedentary nature of IT work, combined with extended screen time and technology-induced interruptions, leads to both physical and cognitive overload. Moreover, the expectation to remain digitally connected—even beyond working hours—prevents adequate recovery time, which is essential for maintaining health and productivity.

Overall, the findings underscore the urgent need for organizations, policymakers, and employees to acknowledge occupational stress as a legitimate health concern. By treating stress management as a core component of workplace wellbeing strategies, companies can improve employee health, reduce absenteeism, and enhance organizational performance.

*2. Recommendations:*

*2.1 Implement structured stress-management programs:* Organizations should introduce mindfulness training, counselling support, and employee assistance programs to help workers manage stress and prevent psychosomatic health issues.

*2.2 Promote healthier workplace environments:* Ergonomic improvements, regular movement breaks, workstation adjustments, and screen-time guidelines can reduce physical strain and technology overload.

*2.3 Encourage work–life balance through policy interventions:* This can include flexible working hours, strict no-work policies after office hours, and balanced workload allocation to reduce burnout risks.

*2.4 Strengthen organizational support systems:* Transparent communication, career development assurance, fair performance evaluations, and job security measures can reduce uncertainty and enhance psychological wellbeing.

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