

# Chapter 7

## Stress Management in an IT Professional Crisis

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### ABSTRACT

*Professionals in the realm of information technology (IT) face a persistent strain stemming from various sources. They're compelled to deliver results that meet targets and budget constraints, which often translates into tight deadlines and lengthy work hours. This pressure, coupled with concerns about job security and the struggle to maintain a work-life balance, contributes to mounting stress levels among them. Unfulfilled career aspirations add another layer to this burden, fostering psychological and health issues. Consequently, this stress dampens their initiative, diminishes their commitment, and saps their motivation, thereby negatively impacting their performance. The prevalence of stress among IT professionals is a topic of significant attention and concern.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

When individuals encounter situations or circumstances beyond their coping abilities, stress ensues, disrupting their control over social, psychological, and biological factors and impacting their usual functioning. Workplace stress often arises from high demands coupled with limited control, affecting all professions significantly.

The adverse effects of workplace stress on employees manifest in various forms, including anxiety, fatigue, depression, tension, headaches, stomach disorders, sleep disturbances, and cardiovascular issues. This leads to absenteeism, reduced productivity, and subpar performance, prompting concern from both organizations and individuals. In today's fast-paced society, effectively managing employee stress poses a considerable challenge for any organization.

The Information Technology (I.T.) sector has played a pivotal role in driving India's economic growth, earning the country a prominent position in the global I.T. landscape. India boasts a wealth of skilled I.T. professionals, facilitating the development of cost-effective products and services for international markets. Consequently, India has become a preferred outsourcing destination for multinational I.T. companies, offering substantial employment opportunities for the youth. The industry's future looks promising, with an estimated creation of around five lakh jobs in 2019.

Despite celebrating the I.T. industry's success, one must acknowledge its profound impact on the work lives of professionals within I.T. companies. These jobs, often contractual and lacking job security, offer high remuneration and a glamorous lifestyle but come with constant pressure to deliver results efficiently. Factors like adapting to customer time zones, uncertainties related to mergers and downsizing, short project durations, and rapid technological advancements contribute to job insecurity and anxiety.

Unreasonable work demands, tight deadlines, long hours, fear of errors, lack of decision-making autonomy, and difficulty in team integration are common stressors among I.T. professionals. Additionally, their personal goals and aspirations differ from those of other employees, leading to acute dissatisfaction if not fulfilled. Consequently, I.T. professionals experience heightened levels of stress, resulting in exhaustion, depression, poor health, frequent absences, diminished initiative, commitment, and motivation, and a desire to change jobs.

Recognizing the value of skilled I.T. professionals, companies have realized the need for innovative management approaches to attract, motivate, and retain talent. Implementing effective stress management strategies is crucial to ensuring optimal performance from these professionals.

One of the most studied smartphone apps for mental health is called "Headspace." To help with stress, anxiety, focus, and sleep, it offers mindfulness and meditation exercises (Headspace Inc., 2023). One of the most popular apps for mental health, Headspace has been the subject of more than 25 research, including 14 RCTs, all of which have used non-clinical populations with the exception of one (O'Daffer et al., 2022). According to a study, three out of four trials on depression demonstrated improvements, but results for stress and improved mindfulness were mixed (two out of five studies showed positive outcomes and four out of seven trials indicated positive results) (O'Daffer et al., 2022).

This may have an effect on psychological elements including subjective perceptions of effort as well as physiological changes in heart rate and heart rate variability. Although it's commonly assumed that meditation is usually calming, studies have shown that it can also increase levels of both physiological and mental arousal (Kozhevnikov et al., 2022). While some individuals may gain from mindfulness practices, others remain unaffected, and some may suffer negative consequences including the exacerbation of internal issues (Farias & Wikholm, 2016).

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