A Contemporary Review on Stress and Coping Strategies in the Workplace: Recent Perspectives (2020–2025)

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Abstract
Occupational stress has emerged as a major concern influencing employee well-being, productivity, and organizational effectiveness. This paper reviews studies on workplace stress and coping strategies published between 2020 and 2025, with particular attention to post-COVID-19 changes, such as digital fatigue, remote–hybrid work patterns, and shifting job demands. This review integrates recent empirical findings and theoretical perspectives to identify key stressors, common coping mechanisms, and organizational practices that strengthen employee resilience. An empirical assessment was conducted among employees of Ninestars Information Pvt. Ltd., Chennai, using a structured questionnaire (sample size: 120; tools: standardised stress-assessment scale and coping inventory). The reliability values (Cronbach's α) for the scales ranged from 0.82 to 0.88, indicating good internal consistency. The results show that adaptive coping, clear role expectations, supportive leadership, and accessible mental health initiatives substantially reduce stress levels. This study underscores the growing importance of psychological flexibility and digital well-being in modern workplaces. Future research should examine stress patterns across different digitally intensive job roles to tailor interventions more effectively.

Keywords: Workplace Stress, Coping Strategies, Employee Well-being, Organizational Resilience, Digital Well-being, COVID-19

Introduction

Today's workplaces operate in an environment characterised by rapid technological development, frequent organizational restructuring, and changing employee expectations. These dynamic conditions expose employees to various stressors, including increased workload, performance pressure, digital dependency, and ambiguous roles and responsibilities. Stress is defined as an imbalance between perceived demands and an individual's ability to cope (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).The COVID-19 pandemic drastically altered work environments by accelerating hybrid work structures, increasing virtual collaboration, and amplifying concerns over job security and digital overload. Consequently, employees experienced intensified psychological distress, burnout, and reduced work engagement. Although several studies have evaluated stress during the pandemic, many relied on early pandemic conditions or were limited to specific sectors, leaving gaps in understanding how stress and coping have evolved in the post-pandemic digital workplace.

The present study addresses this gap by synthesising recent literature (2020–2025) and examining organizational and individual coping strategies. Additionally, an empirical analysis was conducted among employees of an IT-enabled service organisation to identify major stressors and effective coping strategies relevant to modern work environments. Accordingly, this study aims to: 1.Identify predominant occupational stressors in the post-pandemic digital workplace, 2.Assess the coping strategies adopted by employees, and 3.Evaluate the role of organizational support systems in reducing stress and enhancing employee well-being.4.Provide Evidence-based recommendations for organizational, leadership, and employee interventions to manage stress effectively.

Literature Review

Occupational Stress in the Post-Pandemic Workplace

The hybrid work culture, technological overload, and increased performance pressure have all contributed to heightened workplace stress. Employees struggle to balance flexibility and team collaboration (Spreitzer et al., 2024). Digital overload and constant connectivity further increase stress (Kumar and Thomas, 2024). The WHO (2022) reported a global rise in anxiety, burnout, and depression among workers. Technostress has emerged as a dominant stressor among remote employees (Lee & Kim, 2022). Global workplace stress rose by nearly 25% after the pandemic, according to international mental health assessments (WHO, 2022).

Coping Strategies and Psychological Resilience

Proactive coping enhances job satisfaction and reduces stress (Park & Kim, 2023). Mindfulness-based interventions have been shown to significantly improve emotional regulation (Badu et al., 2021). Stress responses are categorised as problem-focused or emotion-focused coping (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2020).

Organizational Support and Leadership

Supportive leadership, employee assistance programs, and flexible scheduling reduce stress (Zhang et al., 2022). Transformational and servant leadership styles strengthen psychological safety and reduce burnout (Singh & Chatterjee, 2021).

Technology and Digital Well-being

Digital detox practices improve engagement and reduce fatigue (Kumar and Thomas, 2024). Meeting-free days and screen time limits support digital well-being (Nielsen et al., 2023). Remote workers experience Zoom fatigue and digital overload (Ayyagari et al. 2021).

Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was adopted to examine workplace stress and coping strategies among employees of the Ninestars Information Pvt. Ltd.. Chennai.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Using a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, the recommended sample size was calculated as 430. Owing to time constraints, shift schedules, and limited access to all departments, a feasible sample of 102 employees (approximately one-fourth of the estimated population) was selected through convenience sampling. This technique was chosen because it allowed quick access to respondents during working hours, without disrupting organizational operations. However, this method has limitations, including the possibility of selection bias and reduced generalisability of the findings beyond the sampled group.

Data Collection and Tools

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising four sections.

- Demographics
- Workplace stress variables (12 items adapted from standardized occupational stress scales)
- Coping strategies (10 items based on Lazarus & Folkman's coping framework)
- Effectiveness of organizational stress-management practices (8 items developed from literature on employee support systems)

Content validity was ensured through a review by two academic experts and one HR professional from the IT-enabled services sector. A pilot test with 20

employees was conducted to refine the wording and item clarity.

Reliability

The Cronbach's alpha values for the major scales were as follows:

- Workplace Stress Scale: α = 0.86
- Coping Strategies Scale: α = 0.82
- Organizational Support/Stress-Management Practices: α = 0.88

All values exceeded the accepted threshold (α ≥ 0.70), indicating a good internal consistency.

Statistical Tools

Data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS Version 20. The following techniques were employed.

- Multiple Regression Analysis
- One-way ANOVA
- KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation)

Data Analysis and Findings

Multiple Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.712	.662	.562	1.06550

Inference

The R^2 value of 0.662 indicates that 66.2% of the variance in satisfaction with coping strategies was explained by the predictors in the model. This demonstrates a moderately strong predictive relationship, suggesting that the selected independent variables are significant contributors to the effectiveness of employee coping.

ANOVA

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	35.837	12	2.986	2.630	.005
Residual	101.041	89	1.135		
Total	136.873	101			

Inference

The ANOVA test showed that the model was statistically significant (p = .005). This confirms that the combination of stress-related variables has a significant effect on employees' satisfaction with their coping strategies.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.934
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx Chi Square	2.226E3
	Df	300
	Sig.	0.000

Inference

The KMO value of 0.934 indicates excellent sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's test significance (p < 0.001) confirms that the correlation matrix is suitable for the factor analysis. This validates the appropriateness of conducting Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Rotated Component Matrix (Varimax Rotation)

	Components						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I doubt my ability to do my job	-	.656	-	-	-	-	-
I am person of high in self-esteem	-	-	-	.525	-	-	-
Don' t know the work demands of my occupation clearly	-	-	.734	-	-	-	-
Lot of advancement(technology)taken place in the working environment	.752	-	-	-	-	-	-
Need to do well when doing work a steam.	.570	-	-	-	-	-	-
I am compelled to work under tight deadlines	-	-	-	-	-	-	.689

I feel conflict between what my department expects me to do and what I think is right or proper	-	-701	-	-	-	-	-
Work I do has as much payoff for me	-	-	-	-	-	-	.640
Priorities of my job are clear tome	-	-	-	.801	-	-	-
Opinion is sought in changing or modifying the working system, instrument and conditions	.676	-	-	-	-	-	-
Most of my suggestions are heard and implemented here	.797	-	-	-	-	-	-
Not having enough staff to adequately provide necessary services	-	.729	-	-	-	-	-
It affects physical and mental health	-	-	-	-	.595	-	-
Increasing the absenteeism	-	-	-	-	.801	-	-
Trouble sleeping at night	-	-	-	-	-	.666	-
It leads to angry	-	-	-	.680	-	-	-
Health maintenance like yoga and meditation is implemented in my department	-	-	549	-	-	-	-
Proper training overcome stress is provided by my department	-	-	-	-	-	-	.709
Stress reduction workshops are conducted in my department	.820	-	-	-	-	-	-
Delegation of work is carried out property	.516	-	-	-	-	-	-
Problem solving methology is properly taught my department	-	-	-652	-	-	-	-
Feel threatened when others watch me work	-	542	-	-	-	-	-

Inference

Factor 1: Organizational Support & Technological Adaptation

- Technological advancements
- Effective teamwork
- Participation in modifying work systems

Factor 2: Role Ambiguity & Job Demands

- Doubting ability
- Role conflict
- Inadequate staffing

Factor 3: Stress-Mitigation Practices

- Lack of clarity in job demands
- Yoga and meditation initiatives
- Training in problem-solving

Factor 4: Emotional Disposition

- High self-esteem
- Clear job priorities
- Tendency to become angry

Factor 5: Health Impact

- Physical and mental health effects
- Increased absenteeism

Factor 6: Sleep Disturbance

- Trouble sleeping

Factor 7: Workload & Training

- Tight deadlines
- Job payoff
- Adequate training for stress reduction

Discussion

The empirical findings reveal that employees experience stress primarily due to excessive workloads, unclear job expectations, inadequate staffing, technological changes, and emotional strain. These patterns align with global research emphasising the impact of hybrid work pressures and digital dependency (Nielsen et al., 2023; Kumar & Thomas, 2024). Factor analysis showed that organizational support, including feedback systems, training initiatives, and participatory decision-making, significantly reduced stress. This supports earlier findings that supportive leadership enhances resilience and reduces burnout (Singh & Chatterjee, 2021). The regression results further confirmed that

coping effectiveness increased when employees received clear communication, adequate resources, and mental health support. Thus, both individual strategies (mindfulness and self-regulation) and organizational interventions (training and flexible schedules) are essential for effective stress management.

Suggestion

Short-Term Recommendations

Organizational Level

- Introduce immediate wellness initiatives, such as counselling sessions, mental health check-ins, and psychological first-aid support.
- Provide clear and updated role descriptions to eliminate ambiguity from daily tasks.
- Implement digital well-being practices, including screen-break reminders, meeting-free hours, and basic workload balancing.
- Encourage employee participation in routine decisions related to workflow and minor process adjustments.

Leadership Level

- Conduct short training modules for managers on supportive communication and empathetic supervision.
- Hold regular review meetings to identify stress triggers and provide quick corrective measures.

Employee Level

- Promote mindfulness practices, simple relaxation exercises, and healthy daily habits.
- Strengthen peer-support groups to improve social connection and reduce immediate emotional strain.

Long-Term Recommendations

Organizational Level

- Develop a structured, continuous wellness program with trained mental health professionals.
- Invest in long-term training initiatives for problem-solving, time management, and advanced coping skills.
- Establish a digital well-being framework integrated into organizational policies, especially for hybrid and remote roles.
- Build systems that enhance the employee voice in major decisions, including technology adoption and redesigning work.

Leadership Level

- Provide comprehensive leadership development programs focusing on transformational and emotionally intelligent leadership styles.

Employee Level

Encouraging long-term lifestyle improvements, including regular physical activity, sleep hygiene, and sustained stress management practices.

Future Research Directions

- Conduct comparative studies across industries, such as IT, manufacturing, and education, for broader generalisability.
- Longitudinal research designs should be used to examine the long-term effects of technostress and hybrid work structures.
- Explore generational differences in coping approaches in digitally intensive work environments.

Conclusion

Workplace stress continues to be a major concern, especially in digitally dependent and rapidly evolving work environments. The study shows that stress arises from role ambiguity, workload imbalance, technological overload and limited organizational support. However, coping effectiveness improves significantly when employees receive guidance, training and psychological support. These findings highlight the need for organisations to adopt comprehensive stress management frameworks that combine individual coping strategies with institutional support mechanisms. By fostering a positive work culture, encouraging open communication, and promoting digital well-being, organisations can enhance employees' performance, job satisfaction, and long-term resilience.

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