

## EXAMINING STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AMONG EMPLOYEES IN THE PRIVATE HEALTHCARE SECTOR OF NORTHERN PART OF WEST BENGAL

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### ABSTRACT

*In today's complex, globalized environment, stress permeates our technology-driven lives. Stress can be defined as an automatic physical response to any stimulus requiring adaptation to change. Stress management encompasses a wide range of techniques and therapies designed to help individuals manage their stress levels, especially chronic stress, to enhance their daily functioning. This study focuses on private healthcare sector employees in North Bengal. Data was collected using the simple random sampling technique and a questionnaire administered to healthcare professionals. The present study investigated the factors contributing to employee stress and identified the problems arising from it. Additionally, it developed techniques and methods to overcome job-related stress. The study reveals that over 90% of employees working in the private healthcare sector experience job stress. Work overload emerges as the leading cause, followed by work-life imbalance, job difficulty, lack of management support, communication gaps, job insecurity, lack of cooperation from patients/families, and union pressure. Job stress can lead to poor health, injuries, and reduced employee health, motivation, productivity, and safety. Subsequently, organizations become less competitive. Stress can be triggered by both workplace and home pressures. To effectively manage stress, the study suggests cultivating a positive work environment, fostering clear communication, implementing sound management practices, providing effective training, establishing strong employee cooperation, practicing time management, developing personal hobbies, maintaining a balanced diet, and incorporating exercise, meditation, and yoga into daily routines, all recognized as effective methods for managing stress and depression.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Stress Management, Private Healthcare Sector, Simple Random Sampling, Work-life Imbalance, Managing Stress and Depression.*

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### Introduction

Stress is something we all deal with in today's fast-paced world. It's that feeling of pressure that can really impact our emotions, thoughts, and even our physical health. As Steers (1981) noted, "Organizational stress has become an important issue for the study of organisational behaviour for several reasons." Hans Selye (2009) defined stress as "a non-specific response of the body to any demand for change." Stress can be described in various ways by different authors. For instance, Benson and Casey (2006) characterize it as an automatic physical reaction to any stimulus that demands adaptation to change. Given that the healthcare field is constantly evolving, it's no surprise that stress is a

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common experience for healthcare professionals, whether they work in the public or private sectors. Those in the private healthcare sector often face stress and have unique ways of coping with it. Therefore, effective stress management is crucial in this environment, involving a wide range of techniques and therapies designed to help individuals manage their stress levels, especially chronic stress, to enhance their daily functioning.

### Review of Literature

There is a vast amount of literature by eminent scholars and business professionals on employee stress management. However, literature available on the stress management of employees, especially in the private healthcare sector, is scarce. Overviews of important studies and the literature are presented below in a systematic manner.

Broke (1973) pointed out that when jobs undergo qualitative changes, it can lead to adjustment issues for employees. The interpersonal dynamics within a department, as well as those between different departments, can create notable qualitative challenges within the organization.

According to Douglas (1980), stress is defined as any action or situation that places exceptional physical or psychological demands on a person.

Ahmad, Bharadwaj, and Narula (1985) carried out a study to evaluate stress levels in thirty executives from both public and private sectors. They used the ORS scale to measure various aspects of role stress. Their findings highlighted the differences in role stress among public and private sector employees across three key areas: role isolation, role ambiguity, and self-role distance. Additionally, they found that several background factors—like age, education level, income, marital status, and work experience—had little to no impact on these stress levels.

Bhandarkar and Singh (1986), in their study on "Managerial Stress: A Study in Cyclical Perspective," highlighted the sources of stress and manifestations between public and private sector executives. The study identified the relationship between job pressures and stress, a positive relationship between locus of control and stress. Additionally, social support was found to have very little direct influence on the perception of stress. Furthermore, the study found that age, education, and family size also contributed to stress.

Van Fleet (1988) pointed out that stress arises when someone faces unusual situations, overwhelming demands, or extreme expectations that can be tough to manage. Brenda IHappel (2013) took a closer look at nurses and the stress they experience in the *Journal of Nursing Management*, where they not only identified the sources of stress from the nurses' viewpoint but also explored potential solutions. Additionally, Saijo, Y. (2013) emphasized the differences in burnout levels and job-related stress.

### Research Methodology

#### Objectives of the Study

The primary aims of the research are:

- To identify the factors responsible for causing job stress.
- To evaluate the degree of psychological distress experienced by employees and its influence on employees' overall well-being.
- To recognize various strategies and approaches to minimise job related stress.

#### Research Frame Work

- **Sampling Technique:** Data have been collected using the simple random sampling technique for this research. The study focused on healthcare professionals in North Bengal.
- **Sample Size:** 100
- **Sample Unit:** North Bengal (A Part of West Bengal)
- **Method of Data Collection:** The present work comprised both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through straight interviews using a survey method from all levels of private healthcare sector professionals (private hospitals) situated in various parts of North Bengal. Secondary data was collected from research publications, reputable journals, and records related to job-related occurrences.
- **Essential Elements:** Gauging the number of individuals experiencing stress in their jobs.

- **Mechanisms Used:** Percentage analysis were used to analyze the data.
- **Limitations:** The notable limitations of the study are: i) Lack of response from healthcare employees. ii) Limited sample size. iii) Small sample unit.

#### Data Analysis and Explanations

With the help of the following tables, data have easily been analysed to reach at appropriate conclusions:

**Table 1: Percentage of Respondents Who Felt Stressed**

Category	% of Respondents
Stressed	91
Not Stressed	09
Total	100

Source: Primary survey

**Table 2: Causes of Stress**

Causes of Stress	Number of Respondents
Work overload	80
Lack of Acceptability	10
Time Management	43
Work-life imbalance	76
Lack of Support from Management	37
Feeling of Inequality	24
Job Difficulty	45
Job insecurity	65
Lack of cooperation of patients/families	17
Communication gap	41
Effective Communication	10
Stress Management Program	14

Source : Primary Survey

**Table 3: Initiatives Taken to Overcome Stress**

Initiatives for Stress Management	% of Respondents
Good Work Ambiance	15
Recognition	18
Continuous Training	13
Effective Communication	10
Meditation and Yoga	30
Effective Stress Management Programme	14
Total	100

Source: Primary Survey

Looking at Table-1, it's clear that a whopping 91% of respondents in the private health sector reported feeling stressed, while only 9% said they weren't stressed at all. Moving on to Table-2, we can see the main culprits behind this stress. It turns out that the biggest sources of stress for health sector professionals include an overwhelming workload, a struggle to balance work and life, job insecurity, challenging tasks, and a lack of cooperation from patients, among other factors. This indicates that employees are under significant pressure, juggling multiple roles and responsibilities. The study also highlights that healthcare professionals often feel stressed due to insufficient support from management and their colleagues.

Table 3 reveals that practices like Meditation and Yoga can have a positive and direct effect on mental well-being, helping individuals build resilience against stress. About 30% of respondents shared their thoughts on how meditation and yoga initiatives could help reduce stress levels. Additionally, around 18% of participants expressed a desire for recognition, emphasizing that acknowledging people's contributions is crucial, especially during stressful times. The analysis suggests that private health sectors are taking steps to alleviate stress by creating a positive work environment, offering ongoing training, ensuring clear communication, and implementing effective stress management programs.

### Implication of Stress

Negative impact of stress on employee's personal and professional life has been exhibited with the help of following table:

Factors/Issues	Adverse Effects
Organizational Issues	Depression, Loss on Production, Casualty.
Psychological and behavioral issues	Difficulties in daily life, Strained relationships, Psychological disorder.
Physical wellness issues	Cronic diseases like heart diseases, diabetes, obesity and inactivity etc.

### Findings of the Study

From the study the following points have been derived:

- The study revealed that approximately 91% of employees working in the private healthcare sector experience job stress because of career oriented and private oriented matters.
- Employees faced excess work pressure in their working place.
- Personal life and professional life inequity was one of the key factors contributing to employee stress.
- Meditation was identified as an integral part of life to reduce stress.

### Suggestions and Recommendations

In order to manage stress of an employees working in private health care sectors in northern part of West Bengal, the following important suggestions and recommendations should be considered:

- **Encourage open communication:** Regularly communicate job-related stress experiences with administrators, colleagues, and subordinates. Participate in open discussions about how job stressors affect performance.
- **Organize stress audit programs:** Conduct programs at all organizational levels to identify stress areas, improve working conditions, and alleviate job stress.
- **Cultivate positive relationships:** Building social connections and friendships helps release bottled-up emotions, thus reducing stress.
- **Build physical and emotional reserves:** Regular exercise, meditation, and yoga can reduce the effects of stress.
- **Redesign jobs:** Take steps to redesign jobs that tax employees' abilities and capacities.
- **Clarify roles:** Provide adequate role clarification whenever necessary to eliminate role ambiguity.
- **Enhance skill development:** Introduce more job-oriented training programs to improve employees' skills and confidence in working effectively.
- **Implement stress management programs:** Organize programs that cater to different leave categories of employees at all hierarchical levels.

### Conclusion

Job stress has become a pressing issue for employees in the private healthcare sector. Many workers are grappling with serious stress-related health problems and mental health challenges. It's crucial for management to step up and help their teams tackle these negative impacts. Since stress in this sector often stems from overwhelming work demands and a lack of work-life balance, organizations should actively support and encourage their employees to find ways to harmonize their professional and personal lives. The study highlights the importance of creating a positive work atmosphere, promoting open communication, adopting effective management practices, offering valuable training, fostering strong teamwork, practising good time management, nurturing personal interests, maintaining a healthy diet, and integrating exercise, meditation, and yoga into daily routines. All of these strategies are proven to be effective in managing stress and depression. By embracing these recommendations, organizations can foster a healthier and more productive work environment for their employees in the private healthcare sector, ultimately benefiting both the individuals and the organization as a whole.

### Scope for Further Research

Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of specific stress management interventions within the private healthcare sector. Studies could investigate the impact of implementing specific programs, such as mindfulness training, cognitive-behavioural therapy, or yoga, on employee stress levels, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Additionally, longitudinal studies could track the long-term effects of stress management interventions on employee health and productivity. By conducting further research in this area, healthcare organizations can develop evidence-based strategies to effectively support their employees' mental health and well-being, leading to a more positive and productive work environment.

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