

## DEMOGRAPHIC IMPLICATIONS OF TECHNOSTRESS ON IT PROFESSIONALS AND COMBATING MECHANISMS – AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

In a globalized world today, technological revolution in organizations have contributed more towards improving efficiency and productivity. The rate of change is found to be at a faster rate especially in technology based organizations which has contributed towards technostress. Technostress is a “state of arousal observed in certain employees who are heavily dependent on computers in their work.” IT Professionals are relatedly more exposed to technostress as they rely heavily on usage of computers. This paper examines the impact of demographic variables on techno stress of IT professionals working in various companies in India and the respective coping mechanisms resorted by them. The research design adopted for this study is descriptive and the data collected for the study are both primary and secondary in nature. Sampling technique used for the study is simple random sampling and the sample size is confined to 204. A well structured questionnaire is used for this research and questions are framed based on Five-point Likert-scale and moreover dichotomous, multiple choice and ranking questions are also used. Analysis is made using various statistical tools like descriptive statistics, Chi-square etc. The study throws light on the impact of demographic variables on technostress of IT professionals and the coping mechanisms that may be helpful in combating technostress

**Key words:** Techno Stress, IT Professionals, Combating Mechanisms, Gender, Work Experience

### Introduction

In an age of increasing digitalization which is marked by rapid changes in technology, IT Professionals play a key role in contributing to the nation’s economy. This in turn has resulted in an upswing in the level of stress. When IT professionals find it difficult to cope with rapid changes in technology in a healthy manner they experience techno stress. They feel compulsive as they have to be connected with constant updates and are forced to respond to work-related information in real-time. Moreover they are also engaged in habitual multi-tasking and are compelled to work faster because information flows faster, and have little time to spend on sustained thinking and creative analysis. Though Technological revolution in organization has contributed more towards improving efficiency, the rate of change is found to be at a faster rate which has contributed towards technostress. Technostress has been defined as a “state of arousal observed in certain employees who are heavily dependent on computers in their work.” Technostress is the general feeling of anxiety and the negative impact on thoughts, behaviours, attitudes, and body when a person is expected to deal with technology. In short Technostress is the negative psychological link between people and the introduction of new technologies.

IT jobs are mostly contractual with less job security but high pay and entail strong competitiveness, along with a globalized life style. There are a few evidences that IT jobs offer an elevated standard of life, but it takes a toll on the mental health and relationship aspects of the professionals. This paper examines the impact of demographic variables on techno stress of IT professionals working in various companies and the respective coping mechanisms resorted by them. IT sector in India witnessed a tremendous growth in the past few decades due to external globalization of the Indian

economy which in turn has witnessed a new work environment. In short majority of the IT professionals are forced to face serious stress problems mainly because of the fact that they are prone more to the usage of computers. At times IT professionals are forced to change the entire paradigm amidst constant uncertainty and high risk. Techno stress is now recognized as a valid health and safety issue at work. Deadlines to be met, changing priorities, longer working hours, e-mails commuting are some of the reasons that contribute towards technostress. Most of the IT professionals experience techno stress as they are under pressure to handle situations that lead to a range of unpleasant and debilitating feelings and symptoms, such as headache, backache, stomach upsets, anxiety attacks and lethargy. This in turn leads to lack of productivity, burn-out and long-term illness if not prevented. In short, Techno stress refers to the stress caused by working more with computerised technology. The sign and symptoms of techno stress include a wide variety of physiological psychological and behavioural changes that are commonly recognized as part of the human condition. These changes are manifested in the form of physical and emotional exhaustion that involves a negative self-concept and negative attitudes as well as loss of concern and feeling for others, especially those who are considered as stressors.

### Review of Literature

Computer related stress represents a negative emotional state when an individual uses a computer (La Paglia, Caci, & La Barbera, 2008) and can experience a situational or continual state of anxiety directly related to computer use. The anxiety is characterized by symptoms of excessive caution around computers, avoidance, negative feedback regarding computers, and attempts to limit computer usage.

- Ranjna (2015) in her study on “Techno-stress among library professionals at the workplace in ICT Era: An Overview” highlighted the issues related to techno stress, particularly in the library setting. The study examined the effects of techno stress and measures taken to avoid it among library professionals.
- R. K. Jena, P. K. Mahanti (2014) in their empirical study on “Technostress among Indian Academicians” concluded that technostress has significant effect on gender, age, technology awareness and tenure of academicians.
- Rajesh Kumar and Roshan Lal (2013) in their study on “Technostress in relation to job satisfaction and Organizational Commitment among IT Professionals” attempted to find out the to find out the impact of technostress on job satisfaction and organizational commitment among IT professionals. The study concluded with the finding that technostress is negatively correlated to job satisfaction and organizational commitment.
- Ankireddy Sailaja (etal) (2013) in their study on “Factors associated with factors associated with job stress of stress professionals in Bangalore city” investigated the investigates factors that contributed to stress and relations among the stress factors of software professionals. The study reveals that the correlation of organisational climate with all other stressors and that the software professionals are much concerned of accommodating themselves to different roles in performing the work assigned. A regression is fitted with different stress factors.
- Alireza Bolhari, Ali Rezaeian(etal) (2012) in their study on” Occupational stress level among Information Technology professionals in Iran” investigated occupational stress among information technology (IT) professionals and attempted to measure the level of occupational stress by gender, age, work experience and d) stress management courses. The results of the study suggested that stress reduction programs and strategies are inevitable due to high occupational stress levels. The relationship between stress level and gender, work experience, and stress management courses were approved through path analysis. Finally, implications of the study are discussed in terms of discussion and further research.
- Tiemo, Pereware Aghwotu (2010) in their study examined the causes, symptoms and coping strategies among librarians in University Libraries. The data generated were analyzed by gender using frequency counts and percentages. The findings of the investigation showed that majority of the librarians experienced technostress due to computers and its related technology. To copy with technostress in their various working places, they agreed to the various coping strategies and plans.
- M. Siva Kumar, Dr.A.Mohamed Siddique (2006) in his study on occupational stress among IT Professionals measured occupational stress among IT professionals in various companies in Chennai. The findings of this study are middle level professionals are experiencing more stress than higher and lower level professionals. The implications of results are discussed with possible intervention to improve the organizational resources among IT professionals.
- WANG Kanliang, SHU Qi (2005), in his study on “Empirical Study of Coping Strategies for Computer-Related Technostress of Chinese Employees” proposed a conceptual framework of the impacts of inhibitors on computer-related technostress. The findings of the study concluded that an improved training utility in computer technology, efficient technology-end-user help-desk will help to alleviate computer-related technostress.

### Research Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is descriptive as descriptive research focuses on the description of the state of affairs, as it exists at present. The data for this study are both primary and secondary in nature. Sampling technique used for the study is simple random sampling which is a probability sampling technique. A sample of 240 professionals were selected and a structured questionnaire was sent to the employees of randomly selected software companies in India. Data were collected from diversified respondents like programmers, developers, software designers, team leaders, project managers etc. But response was only from 225 out of which 21 were found to be incomplete. Hence the sample size was restricted to 204. The questionnaire is based on the Five-point Likert-scale to measure stress. Along with this, demographic data is also collected through the same questionnaire using multiple-choice, dichotomous questions etc.

### Objectives of the Study

- To study the significance of various factors of technostress and their impact on IT Professionals in India
- To find out the implications of demographic variables on technostress of IT Professionals
- To know the various stress coping mechanisms resorted by IT Professionals to combat technostress
- To identify the influence of demographic variables of IT Professionals in combating technostress

### Hypotheses

**Ho1:** There is no association between age and influence of techno stress on IT professionals

**Ho2:** There is no association between gender and influence of technostress among IT Professionals .

**Ho3:** There is no association between work experience and technostress among IT Professionals

**Table 1.1 : Factors contributing towards technostress**

IT Professionals need to cope up with technostress which in turn will help to tackle the problem of stress with a challenge. It is revealed through earlier research studies techno stress is a result of techno-overload, techno -invasion, techno-complexity, techno -insecurity and techno -uncertainty.

- **Techno-overload** – It describes situations where employees in the organization is prone to more and rapid usage of computers.
- **Techno-invasion** – It describes the state of being “always exposed” where people can potentially be reached anywhere and anytime and feel the need to be constantly connected.
- **Techno-complexity** – It describes situations where the complexity in usage of computer systems forces people to spend time and effort in learning and understanding new computer applications and in upgrading their skills which in turn creates technostress
- **Techno-insecurity** – It is associated with situations where people feel threatened about losing their jobs to other people who have a better understanding of new gadgets and computing devices.
- **Techno-uncertainty**- It relates to short life cycles of computer systems. Employees feel that their knowledge becomes rapidly out dated and they are required to relearn things very rapidly and often.

The table below clearly depicts the fact that techno overload is experienced by majority of the IT Professionals as it is ranked as 1<sup>st</sup> which is followed by Techno-uncertainty which is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> . Techno-complexity and Techno-insecurity occupy the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> place respectively. Techno-invasion is ranked as 5<sup>th</sup> and it is therefore inferred that it is considered to play an insignificant role in creating techno stress.

Factors contributing towards Techno Stress	N	Mean	Ranks
Techno-invasion	204	4.3260	5
Techno-insecurity	204	4.1373	4
Techno-overload	204	2.9338	1
Techno-uncertainty	204	3.8186	2
Techno-complexity	204	3.8603	3

Source: Computed Data

**Table 2.1.1 Impact Of Age In Creating Technostress**

Previous research studies indicate that age has got its own significance in creating technostress especially among IT Professionals who rely much on their brainpower and usage of technology. Researches have suggested that there is a direct link between aging and technostress and a finding supports the fact that intense, long-term emotional stress can make people get sick and grow old before their time.

The table below depicts the frequency of the age group of IT Professionals taken for this study. It is very clear from the table that 30 percent of the IT Professionals taken for this study are in the age group of 26-30 years and 26 percent of them are above 40 years of age. 17 percent of the respondents are in the age group of 31-35 years, 15 percent are in the age group of 36-40 and 14 percent of the respondents are less than 25 years.

**Impact of Age in Creating Stress**

<i>Age in years</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<25	28	14.0
26-30	60	30
31-35	34	17
36-40	30	15
>40	52	26
<i>Total</i>	<i>204</i>	<i>100.0</i>

Source: Primary Data

Henceforth it can be concluded that majority of the respondents (i.e) 30 percent taken for this study are in the age group of 26-30 years followed by respondents who are above 40 years of age.

**Table 2.1.2 Association Between Age And Influence Of Techno Stress Crosstab**

Age( in years)	Total	Chi-Square Value	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
<25	28	3.971(a)	.860
26-30	60		
31-35	34		
36-40	30		
>40	52		
Total	204		

Source: Computed Data

**Hypothesis:** There is no association between age and influence of techno stress on IT professionals . From the chi-square table it is found that the chi-square value is 3.971 with p value .860. Therefore the hypothesis is accepted at 5 percent level and henceforth it is concluded that there is no association between age and influence of techno stress on IT professionals

**TABLE 2.2.1 INFLUENCE OF GENDER ON TECHNOSTRESS**

Men and women report different reactions to stress, both physically and mentally. They attempt to manage stress in very different ways and also perceive their ability to do so and the things that stand in their way in markedly different ways. Much of the research studies indicate that women experience high level of stress when compared to men. But some studies indicate that the influence of stress is more or less similar irrespective of the genders. The table below clearly presents the frequency distribution of the gender IT Professionals taken for the study.

**Influence of Gender on Stress**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	104	50.9
Female	100	49.1
Total	204	100

Source: Primary Data

It is ascertained from the table above that among the 204 IT Professionals from whom data were collected 50.9 percent are male and 49.1 percent of them are female. It is therefore evident that female employees are more or less in same proportion as that of male employees in this study.

**Table 2.2.2 Association Between Gender And Influence Of Techno Stress Crosstab**

Gender	Total	Chi-Square Value	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Male	104	13.668(a)	.001
Female	100		
Total	204		

Source: Computed Data

**Hypothesis:** There is no association between gender and influence of technostress among IT Professionals . From the chi-square table it is found that the chi-square value is 13.668 with p value .001. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected at 5 percent level and henceforth it is concluded that there is association between gender and influence of technostress among IT Professionals.

**Table 2.3.1 Influence Of Work Experience On Technostress**

Research studies support the fact that well-educated knowledge workers suffer from serious work-related stress. It is to be good for employees who rely on brainpower to have experience and it is perceived that there is a positive correlation between employee’s experience at work and stress reduction which in turn will lead to enhancement of work-related skills, knowledge and performance. Organizations tend to assume that IT employees with more experience don't need as much guidance and hand-holding as inexperienced employees and they can perform the work with greater efficiency, caution and perfection which in turn will lead to greater level of stress reduction. But in certain cases it is also found that it is the nature of the job which creates stress and there is no association between years of work experience on techno stress of IT Professionals

**Table 2.3.1 Work Experience**

Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage
< 5 years	52	25.0
5-10 years	60	29.4
10-15years	38	18.4
>15years	54	26.2
Total	204	100.0

Source: Primary Data

It is quite clear from the above table that majority of the respondents (i.e) 29.4 percent taken for the study have got work experience in the range of 5-10 years, 26.2 percent of the IT employees have got work experience of more than 15 years and 25 percent of their counterparts have got work experience of less than 5 years and 18.4 percent of the respondents in this study have got work experience in the range of 10-15 years.

**Table 2.3.2 Association Between Work Experience And Technostress**

**Hypothesis:** There is no association between work experience and technostress among IT Professionals From the chi-square table it is found that the chi-square value is 15.656 with p value .048. Therefore the hypothesis is rejected at 5 percent level and henceforth it is concluded that there is association between work experience and influence of technostress among the IT Professionals.

Crosstab

Work Experience	Total	Chi-Square Value	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
< 5 Years	53	15.656(a)	.048
5 – 10 years	60		
10-15 Years	38		
>15 years	153		
Total	204		

Source: Computed Data

**Table 3.1 Coping Mechanisms To Combat Techno Stress – Factor Analysis**

Coping is defined as thoughts and behaviors that people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful. It is believed that the highest individual and organisational performers are those who are able to cope with the fast-changing environment to succeed and achieve high-performing results. Coping lends itself to cognitive and behavioral intervention. This allows the individual to develop techniques and strategies to deal with situations that might be considered stressful.

The various coping strategies adopted by IT Professionals to combat stress is studied with the help of Likert’s five point scale. The research instrument here comprises of twelve variables. The data reduction process of factor analysis is applied and the following results are obtained.

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings			KMO value	Chi-Square value
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %		
1	3.742	31.182	31.182	2.442	20.352	20.352	.766	1332.133
2	1.815	15.122	46.304	2.283	19.021	39.373		
3	1.253	10.442	56.745	2.085	17.372	56.745		
4	.918	7.654	64.399					
5	.769	6.411	70.810					
6	.675	5.627	76.438					
7	.661	5.510	81.948					
8	.563	4.695	86.643					
9	.497	4.140	90.783					
10	.436	3.633	94.416					
11	.367	3.061	97.477					
12	.303	2.523	100.000					

Source: Computed Data

**Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.**

From the above table it is implied that the KMO value is .766. Bartlett’s test of Sphericity with chi-square value 1332.133 is statistically significant at 5 percent level of significance. Therefore it can be concluded that the sample distribution is adequate in explaining the variables as well as in constructing the factors. The following total variance table describes the number of factors extracted.

The twelve variables which is concentrated under the topic coping strategies are condensed into three predominant factors with Eigen values 2.442, 2.283 and 2.085 respectively which is evident from the table above. The individual variances are 20.352, 19.021 and 17.372 relatively. The total variables explained by the twelve variables is 56.745.

The rotated component matrix table above implies that the twelve variables which explains the various coping mechanisms usually resorted by IT Professionals to combat stress can be categorized into three predominant factors. Factor one comprises of four variables. They are:

- Variable Eleven - Visiting Philanthropic Organisations (.804)
- Variable Ten - Visits to holiday resorts (.780)
- Variable Eight - Get together parties(.777)
- Variable Seven - Good Ergonomics and Relaxation techniques (.579)

Therefore this factor may be named as “RECREATIONAL IMPACT”. The second factor however encompasses five variables. They are:

- Variable One – Meditation (.791)
- Variable Two –Usage of user friendly hardware and software (.694)
- Variable Nine – Handle critical situations by reasoning out(.674)
- Variable Six – Enriched jobs (.518)
- Variable Twelve – Discuss technostress and plan for it. (.509)

The second factor may therefore be christened as “**MENTAL PREDOMINANCE**”. The third factor in the rotated component matrix table involves three variables. They are

- Variable Four – Consultation with experienced people (.805)
- Variable Five – Participative Decision making (.777)
- Variable Three – Sharing with trusted empathetic colleagues (.710)

The third therefore can be named as “**ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT**”.

**Table 3.2 Coping Mechanisms Adopted By IT Professionals**

While some stress is a normal part of life for any human being, excessive stress interferes with IT Professional’s productivity which in turn will result in reduction of physical and emotional health. So important ways need to be found out and adopted to keep stress among control. The ability to manage stress in the workplace can make the difference between success and failure on the job as well as in personal life. Emotions are contagious, and stress has an impact on the quality of a person’s interactions with others. The better the employees manage their own stress, the more they are likely to have a positive effect on others as well as on their own performance and the less other people's stress will negatively affect them. IT Professionals in this context, resort to various coping strategies to manage and reduce stress at work in the current scenario.

Coping Strategies	N	Mean	Ranks
Good Ergonomics and relaxation techniques	204	5.9681	8
Visits to Holiday Resorts	204	5.6127	7
Sharing with Confidential Friend	204	3.7917	1
Get Together Parties	204	5.5858	6
Entertainment	204	4.4804	4
Usage of user friendly hardware and software	204	4.6569	5
Discuss technostress and plan for it.	204	4.1593	2
Visiting Philanthropic Organisations	204	6.3701	9
Consulting Experienced People	204	4.3897	3

Source: Computed Data

It is implied through the above table that majority of the IT Professionals are found to have solace in sharing with a confidential friend by using it as a coping strategy since it is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> followed by discussing and planning for technostress, planning about combating technostress, consulting experienced people to discuss about technostress is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. Entertainment as a stress coping strategy is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> followed by Usage of user friendly hardware and software, get together parties, visits to holiday resorts which is ranked 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> respectively. Good Ergonomics as a stress coping strategy occupied the 8<sup>th</sup> position and visiting philanthropic organisations is found to be the least preferred coping strategy to combat technostress.

**Table 4.1 Influence Of Gender On The Factors Of Stress Coping Strategies – Anova**

Factors		Mean Square	F	Sig.
Mental Predominance	Between Groups	5.470	5.531	.019
	Within Groups	.989		
	Total			

Source: Computed Data

From the above table it is found that the factor “Mental Predominance” with F value 5.531 differs significantly with respective gender of collar employees at 5 percent level of significance. This leads to the Post hoc test to analyse the significant differences among the segmentation of the independent variables.

Descriptive Statistics revealed that the female IT Professionals perceived strong agreement of “Mental Predominance” when compared to male IT Professionals which is implied from the mean values.

**Table 4.2 Influence Of Age On The Factors Of Stress Coping Strategies – Anova**

Factors		Mean Square	F	Sig.
Mental Predominance	Between Groups	3.701	3.803	.005
	Within Groups	.973		
	Total			

Source: Computed Data

The table above depicts that the factor “Mental Predominance” (F value 3.803) differs significantly with respective age of the respondents at 5 percent level of significance. This leads to the post hoc test to analyse the significant difference among the segmentation of the independent variables.

Duncan analysis clearly revealed that IT Professionals in the age group of 36-40 have more “Mental Predominance” and IT Professionals in the age group of >40 years and 26-30 years are found to be moderate in this regard.

**Table 4.3 Influence Of Work Experience On The Factors Of Stress Coping Strategies – Anova**

The table below clearly depicts that the following factors differ significantly with respective work experience of IT employees at 5 percent level of significance.

- ✓ Recreational Impact - F value 6.119
- ✓ Mental Predominance - F value 2.491
- ✓ Organizational Support - F value 20.647

This leads to the Post hoc test to analyse the significant differences among the segmentation of the independent variables.

Factors		Mean Square	F	Sig.
Recreational Impact	Between Groups	5.826	6.119	.000
	Within Groups	.952		
	Total			
Mental Predominance	Between Groups	2.455	2.491	.043
	Within Groups	.986		
	Total			
Organizational Support	Between Groups	17.306	20.647	.000
	Within Groups	.838		
	Total			

Source: Computed Data

It is quite evident through Duncan analysis that “Recreational Impact” is found to be high among IT Professionals possessing work experience of less than 5 years and with IT Professionals possessing work experience of 5-10 years the response is found to be moderate in this regard. “Mental Predominance” is found to high among IT Professionals with work experience of 10-15 years and it is found to be moderate with IT Professionals possessing work experience of more than 15 years which is revealed through Duncan analysis. Duncan analysis clearly revealed the fact that “Organisational Support” is found to be high with IT Professionals possessing work experience of 5-10 years while their counterparts are found to have a negative opinion in this regard.

### Findings Of The Study

- Techno-Overload is considered to be the most predominant factor in creating techno-stress as it is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> by majority of the respondents in the study.
- Majority of the IT Professionals taken for the study are in the age group of 26-30 years
- No association is found between age and influence of techno stress on IT professionals
- Men and women taken for the study are found to be in equal proportion and there is association between gender and techno stress of IT professionals
- Around 26% of the respondents taken for the study are found to have a work experience of 5-10 years and there is association between work experience and influence of technostress among the IT Professionals
- The various coping mechanisms resorted by IT Professionals are categorised under three headings by name Recreation Impact, Mental Predominance and Organizational Support.
- IT Professionals are found to have solace in sharing with a confidential friend by using it as a coping strategy since it is ranked 1<sup>st</sup> followed by discussing and planning for technostress, consulting experienced people which is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively.
- Female IT Professionals perceived strong agreement of “Mental Predominance” when compared to male IT Professionals.
- IT Professionals in the age group of 36-40 have more “Mental Predominance” and IT Professionals in the age group of >40 years and 26-30 years are found to be moderate in this regard.
- “Organizational Support” is found to be high with IT Professionals possessing work experience of 5-10 years

### Recommendations

Technostress is found to have an equitable influence on the IT Professionals irrespective of the age and therefore care should be taken by all professionals to alleviate technostress by resorting to suitable combating mechanisms.

Organizational support is also considered to be vital as many respondents as per the study are supposed to have technostress mainly because of techno-overload. Training and development may be given special emphasis with respect to technological advancement as this would help employees to get rid of technostress to a very great extent. Since Gender and work experience have significant impact on technostress care may be taken by IT Professionals by resorting to suitable combating mechanisms.

## CONCLUSION

Globalised scenario have paved way towards the creation of technostress and made it inevitable among IT Professionals to a very great extent. Rapidly changing technology is the stimulant of technostress among the IT Professionals especially in India. To make their employees more productive IT organizations may take special care in alleviating technostress by helping them to combat technostress by resorting to various strategies. The current study would be greatly helpful in understanding the impact of demographic variables on technostress of IT professionals. Managing technostress demands collective participation and immediate attention both by Organizations as well as IT Professionals.

## Scope For Further Research

The study may prove to be a potential and effective platform for carrying out further research by comparing the demographic implications of technostress of Indian IT Professionals with that of IT Professionals working in other countries. Moreover the influences of technostress on employees belonging to various other Professions which rely heavily on technological upgradation and involve wide usage of computers can also be given special attention.

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