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Coping Strategies and Psychological Well-Being among Indian IT Professionals: A Narrative Review with a Gender Lens

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Abstract: ***Information technology (IT) professionals in India work under tight deadlines, long hours, job insecurity and rapid technological change, and Indian studies report substantial levels of stress, depressive symptoms and burnout in this group. How employees cope may help explain why some function well under these conditions while others do not. This narrative review synthesises research on coping strategies and psychological well-being among Indian IT professionals, drawing also on studies of other Indian occupational groups and international technology workers, with particular attention to gender. The evidence shows that approach-oriented strategies such as planning, active coping, positive reframing, acceptance and seeking support are generally associated with better well-being, whereas denial, behavioural disengagement, substance use and self-blame are associated with poorer well-being. Gender findings are inconsistent: some studies report higher stress or burnout among women, while others find no gender difference in depression, anxiety or well-being. Most studies are cross-sectional, use differing measures and were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The review identifies the need for strategy-level analysis of coping, gender-balanced samples, research in under-studied IT hubs such as Gurgaon, and longitudinal designs.***

Keywords: Coping strategies, Psychological well-being, IT professionals, Gender, Narrative review

1. Introduction

India's information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services sector employs a large, young and increasingly gender-mixed workforce across cities such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai and the National Capital Region. The work carries a recognisable set of pressures: client deadlines set in other time zones, long and irregular hours, constant change in tools and platforms, uncertainty about job security and, since 2020, home and hybrid arrangements that blur the boundary between work and personal life [1]–[3]. Indian studies have reported substantial levels of stress, depressive symptoms and burnout in this group [4]– [6].

These figures describe exposure, not inevitability. Employees working under similar conditions report very different psychological states, and part of the explanation lies in how they cope. Coping research asks what people actually do when demands feel taxing, and whether some responses are linked with better functioning than others. A second question concerns gender. Women in Indian IT often combine project work with a larger share of domestic responsibility [7], [8], yet it is not settled whether this translates into different coping or different well-being.

Research on these questions is spread across separate literatures on occupational stress, technostress, coping and well-being, and across samples ranging from students to healthcare workers. This narrative review brings that evidence together. It examines what is known about coping strategies and psychological well-being (PWB) among Indian IT professionals, how far gender differences have been found, and where the evidence is still thin.

2. Literature Survey

2.1 Coping

Coping refers to the thoughts and actions a person uses to deal with demands they perceive as stressful [9]. The most common distinction, also introduced by Lazarus and Folkman, is between problem-focused coping, aimed at changing or managing the source of the problem, and emotion-focused coping, aimed at managing the feelings it produces [9]. Neither category is adaptive in every situation. Planning helps when a stressor can be influenced, whereas acceptance or emotional regulation may suit stressors that cannot be changed quickly, and coping profiles relate to well-being differently across occupations [10].

Measurement shapes what studies can find. The Brief COPE separates 14 strategies, such as planning, acceptance, denial and substance use, so that each can be examined on its own [11]. The Coping Checklist, developed in India, provides a broader profile of coping behaviours suited to Indian respondents [12]. Studies using different instruments, or collapsing strategies into a few broad categories, are not always directly comparable.

2.2 Psychological well-being

PWB describes positive psychological functioning rather than the absence of illness. In Indian research it is often measured with the scale developed by Sisodia and Choudhary, which has five areas: satisfaction, efficiency, sociability, mental health and relations with others [13]. Many IT studies, however, measure distress (stress, anxiety, depression, burnout) or related constructs such as life satisfaction and subjective well-being. These outcomes overlap with PWB but are not interchangeable, which complicates any synthesis.

3. Problem Definition

Evidence on coping and well-being in Indian IT work exists, but it has not been brought together in one place. Individual studies differ in the outcome measured, the coping instrument used, the city and the period (many were conducted during COVID-19 lockdowns). Findings on gender are particularly inconsistent. Without a synthesis, it is difficult for researchers to see which questions remain open and for organisations to judge which coping responses deserve support.

This review addresses three questions:

1) What occupational demands and mental health outcomes have been reported among Indian IT professionals?
2) How are coping strategies related to psychological well-being in IT and comparable occupational groups?
3) What does the evidence show about gender differences in coping and well-being?

4. Methodology/ Approach

A narrative review approach was used, as the aim was to synthesise and interpret a varied body of evidence rather than to pool effect sizes. Studies were identified through keyword searches of academic databases and the reference lists of retrieved articles, using combinations of terms such as "IT professionals", "coping", "psychological well-being", "occupational stress", "technostress" and "gender".

Priority was given to peer-reviewed empirical studies of Indian IT and IT-enabled services employees, mainly published from 2020 onwards. Studies of other Indian occupational groups, students and the general population were included where they shed light on coping, well-being or gender, and selected international studies of IT and software workers were included for comparison. Earlier studies were retained where they provided foundational evidence. The findings were grouped into three themes matching the review questions, and key Indian studies are summarised in Table 1. As a narrative review, the study does not follow a formal systematic protocol or assess study quality with a standard tool.

5. Results & Discussion

5.1. Work demands and mental health among Indian IT employees

Three groups of demands recur in the Indian literature. The first is workload and time pressure. In a Bengaluru sample of 356 IT employees, 17.7% met the threshold for work stress, and more than 80% reported deadline pressure, long working hours, multitasking or difficulty balancing work and personal life [1]. Earlier work in Chennai and Bangalore identified tight deadlines, time-zone differences, team interdependence and client interaction as stressors, with perceived control over technology helping employees cope [14].

The second is insecurity. Job insecurity and workload were associated with weaker career commitment among 352 IT employees [3], and temporary IT workers responded to employment insecurity mainly through upskilling and performance [15]. The third is technology and the changing place of work. Technostress has been associated with exhaustion and reduced well-being [16]–[18], while mindfulness and resilience appear to soften its effects [19], [20]. During lockdowns, IT professionals reported disrupted routines, altered sleep, isolation and blurred work-home boundaries [2], [21], and burnout was high among 934 employees working from home [6].

The resulting mental health picture is concerning. In a national sample of 896 IT professionals, roughly 25% fell in the moderate-to-severe range for stress, anxiety, depression or interpersonal problems [4]. In a Chennai company, 35.3% of 170 employees showed mild and 27% moderate depressive symptoms [5]. The problem predates the pandemic: in 2013, just over half of 129 software engineers reported professional stress (51.2%), and 43.4% were judged at risk of depression [22]. Work-life balance has been linked with PWB, with occupational stress partly explaining the link [23], and life satisfaction among 457 IT professionals was low, rising with resilience and falling with working hours [24].

Not all findings point to poor functioning. A Kochi study of 1,068 IT/ITES staff found PWB at or above the moderate level [25], and organisational and supervisory support were associated with better PWB among employees working from home [26]. The evidence therefore suggests that IT work is demanding but that its psychological impact depends heavily on resources available to the employee, among which coping is one.

Table 1: Selected Indian studies on IT professionals' mental health, coping and well-being

Study	Sample and setting	Main finding
Bharat et al. [4]	896 IT professionals, India	About 25% moderate to severe stress, anxiety or depression; no gender difference in depression or anxiety
Simaon et al. [5]	170 IT employees, Chennai	35.3% mild and 27% moderate depressive symptoms
Trivedi et al. [1]	356 IT employees, Bengaluru	17.7% work stress; higher among women
Kumaresan et al. [6]	934 work-from-home IT professionals	High burnout; descriptively higher among women
Gupta et al. [26]	282 remote IT employees	Organisational and supervisor support linked with PWB
Paul [27]	170 IT professionals, India	Perceived stress strongly and negatively related to mental well-being
Nath et al. [28]	588 IT/ITES employees, Delhi NCR	Coping mediated the effect of job insecurity on subjective well-being
Ram et al. [24]	457 IT professionals, India	Low life satisfaction; no significant gender effect
Korula and Injodey [25]	1,068 IT/ITES employees, Kochi	PWB at or above moderate; no gender or demographic differences
Prasad et al. [23]	IT employees commuting by metro rail	Work-life balance linked with PWB, partly through occupational stress
Sindhuja [29]	151 mid-career IT professionals, Bengaluru	Women reported more happiness; men more meaning in life and burnout

Note: PWB = psychological well-being. Source: Compiled by the author from the cited studies.

5.2 Coping strategies and psychological well-being

Studies from India and elsewhere consistently link coping with psychological outcomes, but the direction of the link depends on the strategy. Among 501 Indian adults during the COVID-19 lockdown, people tended to use emotion-focused coping first and moved to problem-focused coping after reappraising the situation, and this progression went with higher PWB [30]. In a North Indian sample of 220 adults, coping and PWB were positively correlated [31], and a comparison of work arrangements found that home-based employees used more approach-oriented coping and reported fewer mental health problems than essential-service workers [32]. Among women working in the service sector, problem-solving and support-seeking were positively, and avoidance negatively, associated with PWB [33].

Evidence specific to IT employees is more limited. Among 170 Indian IT professionals, perceived stress was strongly and negatively correlated with mental well-being ($r = -.658$), and the author stressed the need to separate healthy from unhealthy forms of coping [27]. A Delhi NCR study of 588 IT/ITES staff showed that coping strategies carried part of the effect of job insecurity onto subjective well-being and, through it, presenteeism; engaged and disengaged coping both mattered [28]. Women in IT-ITES organisations used a range of coping styles that were associated with their quality of work life [34].

International studies of technology workers add detail. Among high-performing IT professionals, those under less strain relied on a wide "portfolio" of responses, including preparing and prioritising, instead of one preferred strategy [35]. Software workers' accounts of technostress (715 reports) yielded 27 distinct coping strategies, and which ones people chose depended on whether they had technical help, autonomy and control over their work [36]. Longitudinal data covering more than a million employee observations tied positive thinking and seeking help to lasting gains in well-being [37].

Studies of other Indian occupations point the same way while showing that context matters. Healthcare workers relied mainly on problem-focused coping, and their coping varied with demographic and work characteristics [38], [39]. Community health workers used several strategies at once [40]. Among police personnel, coping and social support moderated the link between occupational stress and mental health, differently across ranks [41]. Coping has also been linked with PWB among school teachers [42]. A systematic review concluded that coping is associated with burnout outcomes but that the same strategy may not work equally well everywhere [43].

Taken together, the literature supports three conclusions. Approach-oriented strategies (planning, active coping, positive reframing, acceptance and seeking support) tend to accompany better functioning. Avoidant and self-critical strategies (denial, disengagement, substance use and self-blame) tend to accompany poorer functioning. And the value of a strategy depends on whether the stressor can be controlled and what resources surround the employee. Because most studies are cross-sectional, these are associations; it remains unclear how far coping shapes well-being and how far well-being shapes coping [44].

5.3 Gender differences in coping and well-being

Gender findings are the least consistent part of the literature. In some samples, women report more stress or use more emotion-focused coping. Female university students reported higher perceived stress and more emotion-focused and support-seeking coping [45], gender differences appeared in the effects of the pandemic on students [46], and male and female students differed in coping-related defence mechanisms [47]. Among Indian IT employees, the Bengaluru study found a higher prevalence of work stress among women [1], who also showed higher descriptive burnout while working from home [6], and work stress among women in Chennai's IT industry has been documented [48].

Other studies find little or no difference. The national IT sample showed no gender gap in depression or anxiety [4]. No gender difference in PWB appeared in the Kochi IT/ITES sample [25], and gender showed no significant effect on life satisfaction among IT professionals [24] or on occupational stress among remote IT-enabled workers in Hyderabad [49]. Among 200 urban Indians, overall coping did not differ by gender, although religion and humour subscales did [50]. Verma and colleagues reported a gender difference in positive affect alongside a positive coping-PWB link [31]. Among 151 mid-career IT staff in Bengaluru, happiness was higher in women, while meaning in life and burnout were higher in men [29], showing that gender patterns can run in opposite directions on different indicators. A meta-analysis likewise found no overall gender gap in subjective well-being [51].

Where differences appear, researchers usually explain them through social roles. A systematic review found that unpaid domestic labour is more closely tied to poor mental health in women than in men [52]; in Lucknow, working women reported more work-family conflict than men, and this conflict was linked with lower life satisfaction [53]; family support influenced Indian women's productivity while working from home [54], and the combined demands of paid work and household caregiving have been linked with chronic stress among working women in India [55]. Women software professionals describe family expectations, multiple roles and organisational practices as central to their work-life experience [7], [8]. These demands are real, but the evidence does not show that they consistently produce lower well-being or a distinct coping style among women in IT. Gender differences seem to appear on particular strategies or indicators rather than across coping or well-being as a whole.

5.4 Gaps in the evidence

Four gaps stand out. First, few studies examine coping strategies and multidimensional PWB together in IT professionals; most focus on stress, burnout or technostress. Second, coping is often summarised as a total score or a handful of broad styles, so strategies with opposite links to well-being may cancel each other out. Third, gender comparisons in IT rarely use balanced samples of men and women, and evidence from students and healthcare workers cannot simply be transferred to IT work. Fourth, much of the

evidence comes from Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kochi, often during the pandemic, leaving other IT hubs, including Gurgaon and the wider NCR, under-studied under routine working conditions.

5.5 Implications

For organisations, the evidence favours well-being programmes that build specific coping skills, such as planning, prioritisation, problem-solving and constructive help-seeking, over general stress-awareness messages. These efforts work best alongside reasonable workloads, supervisor support and some control over work [26], [36]. Confidential employee assistance should be available for employees who rely on avoidant or substance-related coping. Given the mixed gender evidence, support should be fitted to each employee's situation, for example caregiving load, instead of assuming that men and women cope in different ways.

6. Conclusion

Indian IT professionals work under heavy and changing demands, and a substantial minority report stress, depressive symptoms or burnout. The literature consistently shows that how employees cope is linked with how well they function: approach-oriented strategies tend to accompany better well-being, while avoidant and self-critical strategies tend to accompany poorer well-being. Gender differences, by contrast, are inconsistent and usually limited to particular strategies or outcomes. The evidence remains largely cross-sectional, varies in its measures, and seldom examines specific coping strategies alongside multidimensional PWB in balanced samples. As a narrative review, this paper is also limited by its non-systematic search and the absence of formal quality appraisal, and its conclusions should be read with that in mind.

7. Future Scope

Future research should examine individual coping strategies, rather than combined scores, in relation to multidimensional PWB among IT professionals. Studies with balanced samples of men and women in under-researched hubs such as Gurgaon and the NCR would clarify whether gender differences exist in routine working conditions. Longitudinal and mixed-method designs could show how coping and well-being influence each other over time, and why employees choose particular strategies. Workload, job insecurity, technostress and organisational support should be studied alongside coping. A systematic review or meta-analysis of Indian studies would strengthen the conclusions drawn here.

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