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Self-care strategies for reducing work stress: A study on IT professionals in Bangalore

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Abstract

In this ˙article, we examine the uniqueness of the meromorphic function product with regard to shifts and derivatives. The findings in this research advance and extrapolate the most recent findings of S. Chethan, S. Rajeshwari and T. Bhuvaneshwari (2022).The primary objective of this investigation is to explicate the self-care methodologies employed by individuals working in the information technology (IT) sector to alleviate work-related stress and evaluate the influence of demographic variables, including gender, age, educational attainment, and marital status, on the selection of self-care techniques. This research is characterized as descriptive and aims to investigate how demographic factors influence the implementation of self-care techniques. The research was conducted through the utilization of a meticulously designed questionnaire consisting of 6 demographic inquiries grounded in sound reasoning and 15 queries pertaining to self-care tactics, which were administered to female staff members. A cohort of 100 Information Technology (IT) workers was selected utilizing the Cochran formula with an unspecified population, a margin of error of 10%, and a confidence level of 95%. According to Glen D Israel, it is recommended to augment the sample size by 30%. A total of 130 questionnaires were disseminated. Upon completion of data tabulation, the identification and removal of missing responses and outliers was carried out. A total of 100 valid responses were selected for the research investigation. The participants were requested to complete a survey based on their inclination and suitability to engage in the research, thus utilizing the Convenience sampling method. The scope of the research is limited to information technology firms located in the urban area of Bangalore. A preliminary investigation was carried out with a sample size of 30 participants to assess the dependability and comprehensibility of the survey instrument among the information technology personnel. The findings of the Pilot study indicate that the questionnaire is reliable and valid, as evidenced by a Cronbach Alpha of 0.899, Composite reliability of 0.821, and Average Variance explained at 0.621. The researcher aims to gather data from individuals employed in the field of information technology, and the survey was distributed accordingly. The data analysis in this study was conducted using SPSS version 25, and subsequent discussions are grounded in this analytical framework. The findings of the study suggest that male IT professionals exhibit a preference for engaging in activities such as listening to music and sleeping for extended periods during weekends. In contrast, female IT professionals tend to prioritize dietary habits and increased participation in yoga and exercise. The utilization of self-care strategies is significantly influenced by age. Individuals in the younger age demographic tend to engage in activities such as listening to music,

sleeping for extended periods during weekends, prioritizing tasks, and pursuing hobbies such as singing, dancing, and painting. Conversely, those who are over the age of 40 tend to prioritize activities such as yoga, exercise or attending a gym, adhering to a specific diet, and engaging in religious practices. The educational attainment of IT personnel does not have a significant effect on their utilization of self-care techniques. The utilization of self-care strategies is notably influenced by one's marital status. Married IT professionals seek approaches that prioritize the advancement of their significant other and household. The findings suggest that the self-care strategies employed by IT employees are significantly influenced by their gender, age, and marital status. It is recommended that future researchers undertake a qualitative investigation that involves IT personnel. Longitudinal studies may be employed to explore this subject matter. Future researchers could develop an intervention program aimed at reducing or mitigating stress...

Keywords: *Stress, Coping, Self-care strategies, Information Technology, Employees , Demographic variables*

INTRODUCTION

The term "stress" denotes a state in which the typical functioning of the mind and body is disrupted. The employees of an organization may encounter stress due to various factors such as inadequate job control or the supervisory approach of their manager(Aruldoss, A., Kowalski, K. B., &Parayitam, S., 2021). If stress is maintained within appropriate boundaries, it can potentially have positive effects on both the individual and the organization (Chidambaram, V., Ramachandran, G., Chandrasekar, T., &Parayitam, S., 2022). The pursuit of personal ambitions can be advantageous not only to the individual but also to the broader goals of the organization (Nair, S. L. S., Aston, J., &Kozlovski, E. (2021). Excessive stress can have adverse effects on the physical health, mental state, and psychological well-being of employees (Reddy, Venkatshiva (2019). Psychological techniques that entail the administration of questionnaires can be utilized to quantify stress levels (Frantz, A., & Holmgren, K. (2019). Engaging in leisure pursuits such as sports, music listening, dancing, and other hobbies can serve as effective stress-relieving strategies (Querstret, D., Morison, L., Dickinson, S., Cropley, M., & John, M., 2020). Engaging the services of qualified therapists is a viable approach to reducing elevated levels of stress. Conversely, occupational stress is a noteworthy issue that necessitates attention for the purpose of advancing forward. Consequently, contemporary society is grappling with the phenomenon of job stress, colloquially referred to as the "disease of the era." (Daniel, C. O., 2019). The implementation of stress management strategies such as delegation of tasks, sharing of workload with colleagues, taking time off work to prioritize familial and personal relationships, and reducing the number of extra working hours were identified as the most effective measures. The findings of numerous studies investigating this subject have determined that stress exerts a substantial impact on professionals, thereby impinging upon their productivity levels(Vickovic, S. G., & Morrow, W. J. , 2020; Ehsan, M., & Ali, K. 2019). It is advisable for professionals to possess self-regulation and a positive self-image, participate in ongoing professional growth to enhance their ability to organize and integrate work within project limitations, delegate tasks and authority, and divide work into feasible segments to effectively manage stress. (Shukla, H., & Garg, R., 2013; Jayashree, R., 2010).

The Indian Information Technology (IT) sector has experienced a substantial upswing due to the globalization of the Indian economy and the implementation of favorable policies by the Indian government. Professionals in the IT industry and related fields face ongoing demands to provide services with optimal efficiency while also maintaining cost-effectiveness. Prasad, (D. K., Mangipudi, D. M. R., Vaidya, D. R., &Muralidhar, B., 2020). (Irawanto, D. W., Novianti, K. R., & Roz, K., 2021).

The Indian information technology sector has experienced notable economic growth, positioning it as one of the most rapidly expanding industries (Haque, A. U., &Oino, I., 2019).India has become one of the fastest-growing

information technology markets in the Asia Pacific region due to consistent demand over the past few years. The level of stress encountered by professionals working in the domains of information technology and information and communications technology is significantly greater in comparison to individuals employed in other fields (Channa, A., Sharma, A., &Bajpai, A., 2023). It is common for corporations to periodically issue three to four updates to their software packages, which function as their operating system. It is incumbent upon the employee to acquire knowledge and understanding of any modifications that may arise. Failure to keep up with peers can lead to increased pressure on the individual and potentially jeopardize their professional trajectory if they fail to meet performance expectations (Lee, C., & Wen-Jung, C., 2005). The training program endorsed by the corporation is not tailored to the unique needs of individual employees, as each participant undergoes the same standardized training regimen. (Chen, S., Westman, M., & Eden, D., 2009).

The nomenclature "technologist" denotes an additional form of stress (Guzman, I. R., 2006). The level of communication and interaction among individuals and their colleagues has decreased compared to previous times. This phenomenon has the potential to evoke feelings of alienation and seclusion within colleagues. In the field of information technology, it is imperative for employees to sustain a significant level of precision while engaging in prolonged work activities. A minor lapse in attention or judgement could potentially result in disastrous outcomes for the organization. In order to cope with stress in an effective manner, individuals necessitate a means of release. Objectives are an integral aspect of all types of employment, and in instances where an employee is presented with unattainable targets or is confronted with a challenging situation beyond their capacity, they may encounter stress-related emotions. ***The main aim of this study is to elucidate the self-care techniques utilized by information technology (IT) workers to mitigate job-related stress and analyse the impact of demographics such as as gender, age,qualification and Marital status on the choice of self-care strategies.***

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Three distinct processes have been identified as constituents of stress (Dewe, P. J., O'Driscoll, M. P., & Cooper, C., 2010).The initial stage of primary assessment involves evaluating an individual's perception of their safety status. The secondary evaluation pertains to the cognitive process of devising a course of action in reaction to a perceived threat (Havlovic, S. J., & Keenan, J. P., 1991).The act of implementing that reaction is what is referred to as coping. The concept of "coping" pertains to an individual's dynamic cognitive and behavioralendeavors to meet specific internal and/or external demands that are deemed challenging or surpass the individual's available resources (Dewe, P., Cox, T., & Ferguson, E., 1993). This definition has been articulated in various manners. The significance of coping has been emphasized to the extent that the concept of stress appears to be of lesser importance. In fact, it has been argued that an understanding of stress is incomplete without a thorough examination of coping mechanisms. (Bartram, D., & Gardner, D., 2008).

In numerous contexts, a dichotomy can be established between two methodologies for managing challenging circumstances. Problem-focused coping, also referred to as "vigilant coping," is a coping strategy that involves identifying and implementing solutions to problems or modifying the stress-inducing factors with the aim of minimizing or eradicating stress (Carroll, L. , 2020). The objective of employing emotionally focused coping strategies is to mitigate or enhance the management of the emotional distress that arises from the occurrence (Baker, J. P., &Berenbaum, H., 2007). The preceding methodology usually assumes precedence in situations where there exists a prospect of achieving a constructive outcome. (Cohen, F., & Lazarus, R. S., 1973) Active coping, also known as approach coping, is the predominant coping mechanism employed when an individual is faced with stressors that require endurance. Positive cognitive restructuring is a type of emotion-focused coping strategy that prioritizes the regulation of distressing emotions rather than directly addressing the stressor. This approach involves reinterpreting stressful situations in a more positive manner. Examples of coping mechanisms include placing one's stressful circumstances within a broader context, engaging in positive social comparisons with individuals experiencing more severe conditions, and utilizing humor in a thoughtful and suitable manner. (Palmer, S., & Williams, H. 2013) Cognitive-behavioral approaches, such as stress inoculation and rational emotive therapy, have been utilized to manage stress. Stress inoculation involves anticipating stressful situations and practicing potential responses, while rational emotive therapy aims to prevent negative thinking patterns, such as "awfulizing" and

"catastrophizing," and encourages positive reappraisals of challenging events. Individuals are capable of engaging in active problem-focused coping even after they have reframed a stressful event in a more positive light.

The process of coping involves a critical element of acceptance. Acknowledging the veracity of a challenging circumstance enhances the probability of an individual undertaking measures to resolve the issue, thereby rendering this approach a proficient means of managing stress. This appears to be a crucial consideration in circumstances where the stressor necessitates modification, as opposed to instances where the stressor can be readily modified. Effective problem-focused coping strategies encompass activities such as strategic planning, self-restraint, abstaining from engaging in competitive pursuits, and seeking assistance from external sources. Planning involves the cognitive processes of anticipating and preparing for potential stressors, devising strategies for addressing them, and evaluating the efficacy of various courses of action. To effectively suppress rival activities, it is necessary to prioritize and segregate competing information and initiatives to prevent any potential interference from guests. Exercising restraint is a viable approach to managing challenging circumstances, involving the act of self-regulation and refraining from taking action until the opportune moment arises.

There are various studies focussing on the coping strategies based on genders (Gyllensten, K., & Palmer, S., 2005 ; Olff, M., Langeland, W., Draijer, N., &Gersons, B. P., 2007 ; Iwasaki, Y., MacKay, K. J., &Ristock, J., 2004)., but lack of literature on understanding the self-care strategies adopted based on age, qualification and Marital status. Hence the current study aims to fill this gap.

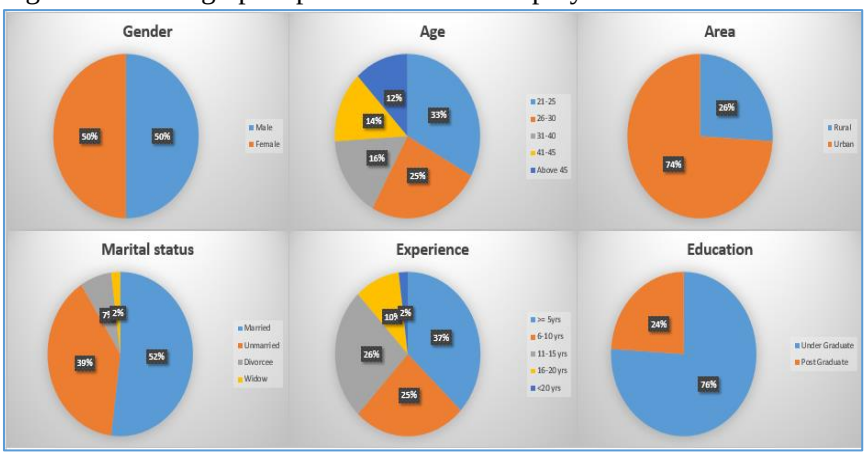
RESEARCH METHODS

The study is descriptive in nature and intends to examine the impact of demographic variables on the adoption of Self-care strategies. The study is carried out using a well-structured questionnaire in which 6 demographic questions based on logical reasoning and 15 questions related to self-care strategies were administered to the Women employees. A sample of 100 IT employees was determined using the Cochran formula of unknown population at 10% margin of error and 95% confidence. As per Glen D Israel, it is ideal to increase the sample size by 30% and 130 Questionnaires were distributed. After tabulation of data, missing responses and outliers were identified and eliminated. 100 valid responses were chosen for the study. The respondents were asked to fill the questionnaire based on their willingness and convenience to participate in the study; hence, Convenience technique was used. The study is confined to the IT companies in Bangalore city. A pilot study was conducted using 30 respondents to check the reliability and understanding of the questionnaire among the IT employees. The Pilot study results displayed a Cronbach Alpha of 0.899 , Composite reliability of 0.821 and Average Variance explained at 0.621 which affirms the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. The researcher intends to collect data from IT Employees and the questionnaire was circulated accordingly. The study uses SPSS ver 25 to analyse the data and discussions are based on the same.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of the IT employees

Figure 1 – Demographic profile of the IT Employees

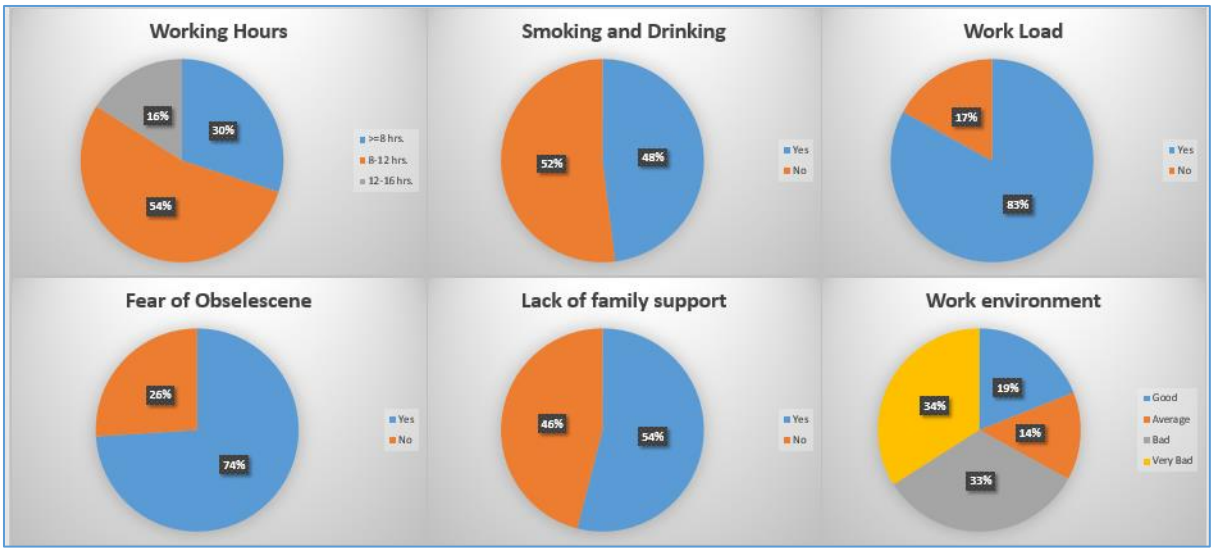


Source- Author created

The demographic distribution indicates that the largest proportion of the population, specifically 34.02%, falls within the age range of 21-25 years. This is followed by 25.77% of the population belonging to the age range of 26-30 years. Additionally, 16.49% of the population falls within the age range of 31-40 years, while 14.43% falls within the age range of 41-45 years. The remaining 9.28% of the population belongs to the age range above 45 years. The population of IT employees is evenly split between males and females, with each gender comprising 50% of the total population. Approximately 74% of the populace is situated in urban regions, while the remaining 26% resides in rural areas. The data indicates that the majority of the population, specifically 52%, are currently married. This is followed by 39% who are unmarried, 7% who are divorced, and the remaining 2% who are widowed. The majority of the populace, comprising 76%, holds an undergraduate degree, while the remaining 24% possess a postgraduate degree. The data reveals that a significant proportion of the population, specifically 37%, possess a work history of over 5 years in the IT industry. Subsequently, 26% of individuals have accumulated 11 to 15 years of service experience, while 25% have garnered 6 to 10 years of experience. A smaller percentage of the population, namely 10%, have acquired 16 to 20 years of experience, and a mere 2% have less than 20 years of experience in the IT industry.

Factors leading to work stress

Figure 2 – Factor leading to work stress among IT Employees



Source- Author created

The majority of individuals, comprising 54% of the population, engage in work activities for a duration of 8 to 12 hours per day. Subsequently, 30% of individuals work for a minimum of 8 hours per day, while the remaining 16% work for a duration of 12 to 16 hours per day. The data indicates that 52% of the populace abstains from smoking or consuming alcohol, while the remaining 48% exhibit habits of drinking or smoking. The majority of the population, specifically 83%, are occupied with workloads in their respective offices, while the remaining 17% do not have any workload. Approximately 74% of the populace experiences apprehension regarding obsolescence, while the remaining 26% do not exhibit such concerns. The majority of the population, specifically 54%, experiences a dearth of familial support, while the remaining 46% report having access to such support. The results indicate that a significant proportion of the population, specifically 34%, report experiencing a very poor office or work environment. This is followed by 33% who report a poor environment, while 19% report a good work environment and 14% report an average environment. The majority of the population, specifically 63%, engage in solitary work while the remaining 37% do not work independently within an office setting.

Self-care strategies for reducing stress

Table 1 – Self-care strategies for reducing stress

		Mean score	Std deviation
1	Yoga	3.64	0.789
2	Exercise/Going to Gym	3.52	0.981
3	Art of living	2.83	0.998
4	Walking	3.24	1.091
5	Listening to music	4.29	0.659
6	Sleeping for long hours during weekends	3.76	0.558
7	Indulging in unsafe sex or Ex-marital affairs	2.16	0.998
8	Smoking	2.47	1.098
9	Drinking	1.85	1.088
10	Diet	3.93	0.763
11	Set Priorities	4.66	0.654
12	Playing Games	2.12	1.074
13	Hobbies (Singing, dancing, Painting, etc.)	3.53	0.754
14	Religious Activity	4.42	0.632
15	Others, if any please mention	4.39	0.745

Through the extensive review of literature 14 Self-care strategies were identified and administered to the IT employees. The responses reveal that listening to music, Setting Priorities and Religious Activity have the highest mean scores of above 4.00 indicating that IT Employees depend on these self-care strategies to cope stress. The IT Employees also used Yoga, Exercise/Going to Gym, Walking, and Sleeping for long hours during weekendsDiet and Hobbies (Singing, dancing, Painting, etc.) with a mean score of above 3.500. The standard deviation is below 1.000 which indicates least variation in Responses.

Hypothesis

H1- There is a significant difference in use of self-care Strategies by IT Employees based on demographic Variables

Table 2 – ANOVA Results – significant difference in use of self-care Strategies by IT Employees based on demographic Variables

	Gender		**Age**		**Education**		**Marital status**	
	Sig	**p value**	**Sig**	**p value**	**Sig**	**p value**	**Sig**	**p value**
Yoga	19.551	0.001	9.106	0.000	0.375	0.781	2.015	0.000
Exercise/Going to Gym	18.230	0.000	7.252	0.000	0.287	0.821	12.371	0.000
Art of living	14.276	0.000	13.102	0.000	1.219	0.889	0.880	0.000

Walking	19.981	0.000	5.826	0.000	0.171	0.671	14.720	0.000
Listening to music	30.052	0.002	4.229	0.000	0.735	0.091	3.386	0.007
Sleeping for long hours during weekends	6.182	0.000	18.553	0.000	0.474	0.721	9.389	0.000
Indulging in unsafe sex or Ex-marital affairs	21.802	0.000	7.451	0.000	2.679	0.677	12.904	0.000
Smoking	9.844	0.030	12.873	0.000	0.344	0.234	2.227	0.000
Drinking	11.611	0.000	4.477	0.000	0.168	0.331	10.168	0.000
Diet	17.615	0.000	8.179	0.000	0.188	0.088	2.398	0.000
Set Priorities	17.300	0.000	7.204	0.000	0.008	0.342	0.007	0.008
Playing Games	12.168	0.000	8.242	0.000	3.533	0.211	3.367	0.000
Hobbies (Singing, dancing, Painting, etc.)	9.003	0.011	16.477	0.000	0.213	0.421	4.022	0.001
Religious Activity	17.443	0.000	12.112	0.000	0.259	0.229	4.851	0.000
Others, if any please mention	12.229	0.001	7.889	0.000	0.195	0.081	9.889	0.041

The results of the ANOVA test show that in case of Gender there is a significant difference in use of self-care strategies as the p values ae below p =<0.05, The scheffe post hoc analysis shows that Male IT employees prefer Listening to music and Sleeping for long hours during weekends where as women look for diet and increased use of Yoga and exercise. Age is also a significant factor which impacts the use of self-care strategies with p values of less than 0.05. The scheffe post hoc analysis shows that those in Younger age group resort to Listening to music, Sleeping for long hours during weekends, Setting Priorities, Playing Games and Hobbies (Singing, dancing, Painting, etc.) and those who are above 40 years of age stick to Yoga, Exercise/Going to Gym, Diet ad Religious Activity. The Education qualification of the IT employees does not impact the use of self are strategies with p values above 0.05. Marital status has a significant impact on use of self-care strategies with p values below 0.05. IT employees who are married look for strategies which involve the betterment of the spouse and family. The results indicate that Gender, age and marital status significantly affect the self-care strategies adopted by IT Employees.

(Gentry, L. A. & et al., 2007)No significant gender-based disparities were observed in the perceived capacity to manage stress. The results of the study indicate that females tend to employ adaptive coping mechanisms, while males tend to resort to maladaptive and avoidance coping mechanisms. No statistically significant gender-based variations were observed in the stages of change concerning stress management.

CONCLUSION

It is widely acknowledged that workplace stress is a pervasive global issue that has significant adverse impacts on both public health and economic welfare in both developed and developing countries. The concept of workplace stress typically refers to a progressive phenomenon whereby an individual's cognitive evaluations of stressors in the workplace lead to negative health outcomes and significant behavioural ramifications. The occurrence of workplace stress can be attributed to a work environment that is deemed "toxic", characterized by various factors such as inadequate control, excessive work demands, insufficient information, intense pressure, and limited decision-making autonomy. The International Labor Organization (ILO) has reported that the advent of globalisation and the global financial crisis have exerted a considerable influence on the work environment, resulting in a surge in demand

and concomitant stress and related challenges. The influence of workplace stress extends beyond the health and well-being of employees, as it also exerts a noteworthy impact on the economy. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized the significance of preventing mental illness and promoting mental health in workplaces globally, in response to the aforementioned issue. Consequently, a growing number of enterprises, scientific establishments, and business professionals and educators have started to focus on the psychological well-being of their workforce. Furthermore, a substantial body of research spanning the last forty years has been carried out across various vocations , encompassing community healthcare, law enforcement personnel, firefighters, educators, factory laborers, and correctional officers in diverse nations. Furthermore, research has been conducted to examine the impact of gender on the selection of stress management techniques. Therefore, the present investigation centered on. The primary objective of this investigation is to explicate the self-care methodologies employed by individuals working in the information technology (IT) sector to alleviate work-related stress and evaluate the influence of demographic factors, including gender, age, educational attainment, and marital status, on the selection of self-care techniques. The findings of the study suggest that male IT workers exhibit a preference for engaging in activities such as listening to music and sleeping for extended periods of time during weekends, whereas female IT workers tend to prioritize dietary habits and increased participation in yoga and exercise. Age is a crucial determinant that influences the utilization of self-care techniques. Individuals belonging to the younger age group tend to adopt self-care strategies such as listening to music, sleeping for extended periods during weekends, prioritizing tasks, and engaging in hobbies such as singing, dancing, and painting. Conversely, individuals aged 40 years and above tend to rely on self-care practices such as yoga, exercise or gym workouts, dietary modifications, and religious activities. The educational attainment of IT personnel does not have a significant effect on their utilization of self-care techniques. The utilization of self-care strategies is notably influenced by one's marital status. Married IT professionals seek strategies that prioritize the improvement of their spouse and family. The findings suggest that the self-care strategies employed by IT employees are significantly influenced by their gender, age, and marital status. It is recommended that future researchers undertake a qualitative investigation that involves IT personnel. Longitudinal studies may be employed to explore this subject matter. Future researchers may develop an intervention program aimed at reducing or mitigating stress.

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