

## ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to determine prevalence of psychological distress, to describe the work stress and selected factors associated with it and coping strategies of stress among IT professionals in the private sector of Sri Lanka. A descriptive cross sectional study was carried out to meet these objectives. The selection of the sample was done using cluster sampling with probability proportionate to size.

IT professionals in IT organizations who have work experience more than one year at present station was included as study subjects. Study instrument was a self administered questionnaire (developed as an electronic form with HTML) consisted of four parts; validated version of item 30 general health questionnaire (30 GHQ), questionnaire on socio-demographic and work related factors, work stress assessment questionnaire and questionnaire on coping strategies.

Out of the required sample size of 663 IT professionals, 604 participated in this study giving a response rate of 91%. Majority of the participants were at younger age group with the mean age of 30 years and Sinhalese. Male preponderance was observed. The proportion of unmarried participants was higher. There were 43% of IT graduates, 20% of non IT graduates making the bulk of the study sample. A higher proportion (57%) of participants was included in Rs 20,000 – 45,000 monthly income category. It was observed that 55% of participants were doing extra duty more than five hours per week. Only 5% of participants were paid for extra duty. The prevalence of psychological distress (GHQ score  $\geq 6$ ) among IT professionals was 41%.

Excessive work load, lack of rewards, lack of opportunity to career development and organizational decisions regarding dead lines were main stressors for majority of

participants in the study group. A lower proportion of participants were affected by stressors like monotony, ambiguity, relationships with superiors/co-workers.

There is a statistical significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) association between psychological distress and work stress.

Factors associated with high level of work stress were age, marital status, employment status of spouse, health problems, years of service at present organization, extra work hours and weekend duty. Company with relatives/friends was a protective factor against work stress.

Higher proportion of participants had adapted problem focused coping strategies to overcome stress. Higher proportion of study sample preferred to adapt harmless coping strategies but some have adapted harmful coping strategies like smoking (5%) and alcohol (7%).

Interventions like training programmes for stress management and conducting awareness programmes for managers at IT organizations can be recommended to make IT field a more worker-friendly.