

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 9 | Issue 2

2026

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Lifestyle Pattern and Time Distribution of IT Professionals in Chennai City

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the lifestyle pattern of IT professionals in Chennai by examining how their time is being distributed and the existence of time poverty for their personal activities, development and social interactions. It analyses how the routine of work, commuting, and sleep, day to day routine works limits personal time and affects social interaction and self-development. Data was collected from 25 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The findings indicate that most respondents experience limited personal time, extended work involvement, and mental exhaustion due to an always-on work culture. The study concludes that such patterns lead to time poverty, reduced work-life balance, and a sense of disconnection from personal life, highlighting the need for flexible work policies and reduced commuting.

Keywords: *IT professional, work, commutation, personal development and social interaction.*

I. INTRODUCTION

People nowadays spend far too much time in the office dealing with clients, and the stress of their jobs interferes with and impacts their home lives, making it impossible to fulfil household responsibilities. Many people are emphasizing the importance of striking a balance between their personal and professional lives. Rapid technology advancements and their application in business have led in the development of a situation where employees have begun to feel powerless, normless, social isolation, and self-estrangement. Working late hours, often until midnight, working on weekends has become inevitable in this industry, which leads to being very stressful for employees, especially given long commutes, humid weather, high pollution, bad roads, frequent traffic jams, and crowded public transport in Chennai city. Even not having enough proper time for family members, there is little time and energy to socialize with others and an increasing number of IT professionals have been finding it difficult to handle emotional stress, according to experts and everything is not smooth sailing for these knowledge workers

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at Chennai. Over the past 25 years there has been a rapid increase in work which is felt to be due, in part, by information technology and by an intense, competitive work environment.

The IT sector continues to evolve and play a crucial role in India's economy but they do not look into the importance of work life balance (WLB) for individuals working in this field has become more apparent. India scores a low percentage of WLB when compared to other countries. Indians worked 2,195 hours a year on average. On the other hand, employees in Hamburg, Germany work for 1,473 hours, which is in the top three cities with WLB. One definition of WLB is that meaningful daily achievement and enjoyment in each of the four life quadrants: work, family, friends and self. It does not mean an equal balance. equal number of hours for each of your various work and personal activities are unrealistic. But the problem here is that IT professionals have no time for personal activities and development, they feel like they are fully trapped at work. The unhealthy life choices that many people make are making mistakes because they are neglecting other important areas of their lives such as family, friends, personal development, social interaction, hobbies etc.

Burnout theory: Focuses on the "mismatch" between the person and their work environment. It is a psychological syndrome caused by chronic workplace stress.

characterized by three core dimensions: emotional exhaustion, detachment and reduced professional efficacy.

Alienation Theory: Developed by Karl Marx, Marx explained that workers in modern economic systems become alienated (separated) from their work, the product they create, other people and their own self.

This will lead to time poverty among IT workers by occupying most of their daily time with work, commuting, and basic activities. It also reinforces an always-on work culture, where employees remain connected to work beyond official hours. As a result, personal time is significantly reduced, affecting social interaction, self-development, and overall well-being.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hari babu V, (2024) This review finds various factors affecting WLB in IT employees including organizational policies, gender-specific issues, technostress, burnout, social support, and flexible work options and the findings show that supportive management, psychological freedom, and established flexible work practices can improve WLB and employee happiness. However, major gaps remain, especially in the long-term effect of mixed work settings and the interplay of socio-demographic factors with WLB.

Anugrahaa R, (2023) A study on WLB of employees was conducted in IT organizations in Coimbatore and this study find out that causes of disproportionate work-life balance, the benefits for the individual and the organizations in enabling a proper balance between work and life. This study also recommends a few suggestions. Individuals need to optimize happiness in life by a fine balance between life, enjoyment and work. The ratio is purely individualistic and needs to be established by oneself.

Parminder Walia, (2015) attempted to investigate the relationship between demographic variables such as gender and age, as well as the work-life balance of IT and ITES workers. According to the findings, females view work to be more interfering with their personal lives than males. The findings also suggest that, while work-life balance may not be age-related, employees of any age may view it as such based on their own circumstances.

Mohammad Niaz (2018) in his research titled "Work life balance practices and gender gap in job satisfaction" examines the role of the work life balance practices by explaining the paradox of the contented women worker". In his research he finds out that women report higher levels of job satisfaction than that of men. The main finding is that WLB is the important determinant of the intrinsic extrinsic aspects of job satisfaction.

Rebecca (2019) quotes in "Work life balance-Men and Women" that woman. and men have a different perception generally on balance the work and life. She says that women devote more time on her family and the men spend more time pursuing his personal interests. She also quotes that balance is not only about dividing the time spent on work and personal life, but also establishing harmony that reflects on the individual's priorities.

III. RESEARCH GAP

Although several studies have examined work–life balance and stress among IT professionals, limited research has focused on the concept of time poverty and the daily time distribution of employees. In particular, the combined impact of long working hours and commuting on the personal lives of IT professionals remains under explored. Furthermore, there is a lack of localized studies examining how IT professionals in metropolitan cities like Chennai experience the repetitive cycle of work, travel, and sleep, and how this affects their overall well-being.

IV. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Different roles such as work and other life roles are either totally or partially incompatible, whereby participation in one role is made more difficult by the participation in another, resulting in a negative spill over between the two domains. Emotional stress occurs when the environment

is constrained. The time spent with family is also decreasing. IT professionals experienced varying degrees of stress and many felt exhausted at the end of the day and even less able to cope with their domestic responsibilities. Employees commuting over 30 minutes report significantly lower positive work-life balance (14.4%) compared to those with shorter commutes (60.1%). The daily routine of IT workers is largely limited to work, commuting, routine activities, and sleep, leaving minimal time for personal development, leisure, and social interaction, leading to a repetitive work cycle.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse how IT professionals in Chennai allocate their daily time between work, commuting, sleep, and personal activities.
2. To assess the effect of the work–travel–sleep routine on personal development, social interaction and family life.
3. To formulate and suggest strategies to balance work and personal life of IT professionals.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted by employing primary, theoretical and secondary sources, which is synthesizing the literatures published regarding work-life balance among urban, especially Chennai IT professionals. The core sources are collected by the empirical studies of collecting 25 respondents of IT workers in Chennai, scholarly journals, organizational reports, and national surveys. This study also analyses and integrates the Burnout Theory, alienate theory, to interpret the multidimensional aspects of the work-life balance. Analysing the 25 respondents collected and critically evaluating the existing data, this study identified the crucial challenges faced by IT workers in Chennai to balance work and personal life. An offering context-sensitive recommendations for the policy and practice.

VII. ANALYSIS

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Particulars	Variable	Number of respondents	Percentage
Age	Below 20 years	0	0
	20-25 years	15	60
	26-30 years	7	28

	31-40 years	2	8
	Above 40 years	1	4
	Total	25	100
Gender	Male	14	56
	Female	11	44
	Prefer not to say	0	0
	Total	25	100
Marital Status	Married	6	25
	Unmarried	19	75
	Total	25	100
Educational Qualifications	Diploma	3	12
	Undergraduates (UG)	19	76
	Postgraduates (PG)	3	12
	Total	25	100

Source: Primary Data

The majority of respondents belong to the 20–25 age group (60%), followed by 26–30 years (28%), indicating a predominantly young workforce. A slightly higher proportion of respondents are male (56%) compared to female (44%). Most respondents are unmarried (75%), and a significant majority are undergraduates (76%), reflecting the typical demographic composition of the IT sector workforce.

Table 2: Work Characteristics and Living Conditions

Particulars	Variable	Number of respondents	Percentage
Work mode	Work from home	1	4
	Work from office	15	60
	Hybrid	9	36
	Total	25	100
Type of role in IT	Software developer	12	48

	Testing / QA	1	4
	Support / Maintenance	4	16
	Data analytics	8	32
	Total	25	100
Monthly income range	Below 20,000	3	13
	20,000-50,000	13	52.2
	50,000-1,00,000	8	30.4
	Above 1,00,000	1	4.4
	Total	25	100

Source: Primary Data

A large proportion of respondents are employed in work-from-office (60%) or hybrid mode (36%), with only a minimal percentage working entirely from home. In terms of job roles, software developers (48%) form the largest group, followed by data analytics and support roles. Regarding living arrangements, over half of the respondents live with family (52.2%), while others live alone or with friends.

Table 3: Work Hours and Commuting Pattern

Particulars	Variable	Number of respondents	Percentage
Do you live alone or with family	Alone	9	39.1
	With family	13	52.2
	With friends / roommates	3	8.7
	Total	25	100
How many hours do you work in a day	Less than 6 hours	0	0
	6-8 hours	6	20.8
	8-10 hours	13	58.3
	Above 10 hours	6	20.8
	Total	25	100
How much do you	Less than 30 minutes	9	34.8

spend travelling (to and from work)	30-1 hour	10	39.1
	1-2 hours	4	17.4
	More than 2 hours	2	8.7
	Total	25	100
Distance between your home and workplace	Less than 5 kilometres	7	26.1
	5-10 kilometres	7	26.1
	10-20 kilometres	7	26.1
	Above 20 kilometres	4	8.7
	Total	25	100

Source: Primary Data

The findings indicate that a majority of respondents work 8–10 hours per day (58.3%), with a notable proportion working more than 10 hours. Commuting time is also significant, with many respondents spending 30 minutes to 2 hours daily, and a considerable number residing 5–20 kilometres away from their workplace. These factors collectively contribute to the reduction of available personal time.

Table 4: Lifestyle Pattern and Personal Time

Statement	Yes		No		Sometimes		Total	
	%	NOR	%	NOR	%	NOR	%	NOR
Do you feel your daily life is mostly work, travel, and sleep?	56.6	14	8.7	3	34.8	8	100	25
Do you get enough time for personal activities (hobbies, learning, etc)?	17.4	5	43.5	11	39.1	9	100	25
Do you spend enough time with family or friends?	13	4	34.8	8	52.2	13	100	25
Do you feel disconnected from your personal life due to work?	50	13	18.2	4	31.8	8	100	25

Source: Primary Data

The data reveals that a substantial proportion of respondents perceive their daily life as being largely limited to work, travel, and sleep. A majority report having insufficient time for personal activities, including hobbies and self-development. Additionally, many respondents indicate

that they do not spend adequate time with family or friends, suggesting restricted social interaction.

Table 5: Work Pressure and Psychological Impact

Statement	Yes		No		Sometimes		Total	
	%	NOR	%	NOR	%	NOR	%	NOR
Do you check or respond to work messages after office hours?	73.9	18	21.7	5	4.4	2	100	25
Do you feel exhausted because of work?	42.9	10	47.6	12	9.5	3	100	25

Source: Primary Data

The analysis highlights that a significant number of respondents frequently check or respond to work-related messages after office hours, indicating the presence of an always-on work culture. Furthermore, a considerable proportion report feeling mentally exhausted, which reflects the prevalence of burnout among IT workers due to continuous work demands.

Table 6: Work–Life Balance and Suggested Improvements

Particulars	Variable	Number of respondents	Percentage
Are you satisfied with your current Work-life balance?	Yes	3	13.6
	No	10	40.9
	Neutral	12	45.5
	Total	25	100
What change would you improve your life the most?	Less working hours	3	13.6
	Work from home	3	13.6
	Less travel time	3	9.1
	More leave	7	27.3
	Flexible timing	9	36.4
	Total	25	100

Source: Primary Data

The findings suggest that a notable number of respondents are not satisfied or only moderately satisfied with their work–life balance. In terms of improvements, the most preferred measures include flexible working hours (36.4%), more leave (27.3%), and options such as work from home and reduced working hours, indicating a strong need for organizational changes to enhance employee well-being.

VIII. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study is confined to respondents from Chennai city, and therefore the findings may not be applicable to IT workers from other urban regions, towns, or rural areas. The sample size considered for the study is limited and may not fully represent the broader IT worker's population. The research primarily focuses on selected sample of IT professionals to understand their opinions on the lifestyle of IT workers and time poverty. the findings should be interpreted with caution, as they reflect the views of 25 Respondent within Chennai. The data collected is based on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by personal perceptions, emotions, or response bias of the participants.

IX. SUGGESTIONS

- Organizations should implement flexible work schedules to help employees better manage their professional and personal responsibilities.
- Promotion of Remote and Hybrid Work by encouraging work-from-home or hybrid models can significantly reduce commuting time.
- Companies should enforce strict policies to limit excessive working hours and avoid unnecessary overtime.
- The strict enforcement of working hours and to prevent excessive work load.
- Mandatory Leave Policies should be enforced.
- Decentralization of IT Workspaces by establishing IT hubs in suburban or nearby regions.
- Employee Wellness Programs like mental health support, counselling services, and stress management programs to enhance employee well-being.

X. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the lifestyle of IT professionals in Chennai is predominantly structured around work, commuting, and sleep, resulting in significant time poverty. This limits opportunities for personal development, social interaction, and overall well-being. The findings also indicate the presence of always-on work culture, contributing to mental exhaustion and

burnout, along with a sense of disconnection from personal life. Overall, the study highlights the need for organizational and policy-level interventions to ensure a healthier work–life balance and improved quality of life for IT employees.

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