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DETERMINANTS OF EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AMONG THE IT PROFESSIONALS IN CHENNAI

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Abstract
Emotional exhaustion has become a critical issue among Information Technology (IT) professionals due to increasing job demands, long working hours, and continuous performance pressure. The present study investigates the determinants of emotional exhaustion among IT professionals in Chennai, focusing particularly on work-life balance dimensions. The study examines five dimensions of work-life balance—neglecting life, work dominance, making time for oneself, work-life harmony, and over-commitment—and their influence on the physical demand dimension of emotional exhaustion.
Primary data were collected from 120 IT professionals using a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis were applied using SPSS software. The findings reveal that all work-life balance dimensions have a significant positive relationship with physical demand. Among them, over-commitment emerged as the strongest predictor of emotional exhaustion. The regression model explains 42.2% of the variance in physical demand.
The study concludes that improving work-life balance practices is essential to reduce emotional exhaustion and maintain employee productivity in Chennai's IT sector.
Keywords: Emotional Exhaustion, Work-Life Balance, Physical Demand, Over-Commitment, IT Professionals.

1. Introduction

The Information Technology (IT) sector plays a pivotal role in the economic development of India, contributing significantly to employment generation, foreign exchange earnings, and technological advancement. Chennai has emerged as one of the major IT hubs in the country, hosting numerous multinational corporations, software development centers, and technology parks such as OMR, Siruseri SIPCOT, and DLF IT Park. The sector is characterized by rapid innovation, global connectivity, high client expectations, and continuous performance monitoring. While these features promote growth and competitiveness, they also impose substantial psychological and physical demands on employees [1].
In recent years, emotional exhaustion has become a growing concern within the IT workforce. Emotional exhaustion represents the core dimension of burnout and refers to a state of feeling emotionally drained, fatigued, and depleted of personal resources due to prolonged occupational stress. IT professionals frequently work under tight deadlines, extended working hours, rotating shifts, and constant technological updates. These job characteristics increase cognitive load and

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reduce opportunities for recovery, thereby contributing to burnout symptoms [2].

One of the most significant contributors to emotional exhaustion is imbalance between professional and personal life. Work-life balance refers to an individual's ability to manage work responsibilities alongside personal, family, and social commitments. In the IT industry, technological connectivity has blurred the boundaries between work and home life. Employees often respond to emails after office hours, attend virtual meetings across time zones, and carry unfinished tasks into personal time. As a result, recovery time is compromised, leading to cumulative stress [3].

Work-life balance is not a single construct but consists of multiple dimensions. Neglecting life occurs when employees postpone or ignore personal responsibilities due to work pressure. Work dominance refers to the perception that professional responsibilities overshadow personal life. Making time for oneself reflects the ability to engage in leisure, hobbies, and relaxation. Work-life harmony indicates integration and balance between professional and personal domains. Over-commitment represents excessive dedication to work that extends beyond formal working hours [4].

When these dimensions are negatively experienced, they contribute to physical and emotional strain. Physical demand, a key aspect of emotional exhaustion, manifests as fatigue, reduced energy levels, and psychosomatic symptoms. In the IT context, prolonged screen exposure, sedentary work patterns, and irregular schedules further intensify physical strain [5].

The post-pandemic work environment has further complicated the situation. Hybrid and remote working models, although offering flexibility, have also extended working hours and increased expectations of availability. The absence of clear boundaries between work and home environments has amplified work-life conflict, particularly in metropolitan cities like Chennai [6].

Despite increasing attention to employee well-being, empirical research focusing specifically on determinants of emotional exhaustion among IT professionals in Chennai remains limited. Most studies examine burnout at a general level without deeply analyzing how specific dimensions of work-life balance influence physical demand. Therefore, there is a need for systematic investigation into how these dimensions interact and contribute to emotional exhaustion in this regional context [7].

Understanding these determinants is important for both academic and managerial purposes. From an academic perspective, it contributes to the literature on occupational stress and work-life balance in emerging economies. From a managerial perspective, identifying key predictors enables organizations to design targeted interventions such as workload management, flexible scheduling, and employee wellness programs [8].

Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the determinants of emotional exhaustion among IT professionals in Chennai by analyzing the relationship between work-life balance dimensions and physical demand. By doing so, the study provides insights into strategies that can reduce burnout and promote sustainable workforce management in the IT sector [9].

2. Review of Literature

Emotional exhaustion has been widely recognized as the central dimension of burnout and is often associated with prolonged occupational stress. It reflects feelings of being emotionally and physically drained due to excessive job demands. Over the years, scholars have examined burnout

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in various professional contexts, highlighting the importance of organizational and psychological determinants [10].

Behavioral outcomes are influenced by attitudes, perceived control, and subjective norms. In workplace settings, employees' perceptions of control over work demands significantly affect stress levels and emotional responses. When employees perceive limited control over workload and time management, emotional strain increases. Environmentally and socially significant behaviors are influenced by values and beliefs, suggesting that workplace behavior is shaped by broader cognitive and emotional processes. Similarly, value orientations influence personal priorities, including the importance given to work versus personal life. When work-related values dominate excessively, work-life imbalance may occur [11].

Behavioral theory in the hospitality sector and found that job-related pressures significantly influence employees' psychological states. Later, work stressors are strongly associated with pro-environmental and personal well-being behaviors, indirectly linking occupational stress to emotional exhaustion [12]. A meta-analysis showing that psychological determinants such as perceived behavioral control and social norms significantly predict behavioral responses. In organizational settings, lack of autonomy and excessive workload reduce perceived control, thereby increasing stress and exhaustion. Organizational pressures influence employee perception and authenticity [13]. Though their focus was on greenwashing, the study highlighted how misalignment between organizational practices and employee values can create cognitive strain. Further emphasized that organizational expectations often create performance pressure, which can indirectly increase employee burnout [14].

Confusion, perceived risk, and lack of trust increase psychological discomfort [15]. Although their research focused on green trust, the findings indicate that unclear expectations and perceived imbalance generate emotional strain [16]. A trust framework in tourism, showing that supportive organizational environments reduce stress and increase positive psychological outcomes [17]. Similarly, Perceived social responsibility and supportive reputation enhance trust and reduce emotional discomfort. In the context of work-life balance, highlighted the attitude–behavior gap, suggesting that individuals may value balance but struggle to practice it due to external constraints. Lifestyle factors strongly influence personal well-being and stress outcomes. Environmental and contextual factors significantly influence behavioral intentions, implying that workplace context plays a crucial role in shaping employee stress responses. Increasing global competitiveness intensifies professional pressure, especially in rapidly developing industries [18].

The importance of systematic research design in studying behavioral constructs such as stress and exhaustion. That multivariate statistical techniques such as regression analysis are essential for identifying predictive relationships between workplace variables. Although previous studies have examined burnout, stress, and work-life balance independently, limited research has focused specifically on how distinct dimensions of work-life balance influence physical demand and emotional exhaustion among IT professionals in Chennai. This study attempts to fill this gap by empirically analyzing the relationship between neglecting life, work dominance, making time for oneself, work-life harmony, over-commitment, and physical demand [19].

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

3.1 Conceptual Framework

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Emotional exhaustion is widely regarded as the core dimension of burnout and reflects a state of physical fatigue and psychological depletion caused by prolonged exposure to stressors. In the IT sector, stressors arise primarily from excessive workload, tight deadlines, continuous connectivity, and blurred work–life boundaries.

The present study conceptualizes work-life balance as a multidimensional construct consisting of:

- Neglecting Life
- Work Dominance
- Making Time for Oneself
- Work-Life Harmony
- Over-Commitment

These five dimensions are treated as independent variables, while Physical Demand (Emotional Exhaustion dimension) is treated as the dependent variable.

The framework assumes that poor work-life balance increases physical strain and emotional exhaustion. Specifically:

- When employees neglect personal life due to work, recovery time reduces.
- When work dominates life, psychological detachment becomes difficult.
- When individuals fail to make time for themselves, stress accumulates.
- When harmony between work and personal life is low, conflict intensifies.
- When over-commitment is high, physical and emotional resources deplete faster.

Thus, imbalance in any of these dimensions is expected to increase physical demand and emotional exhaustion.

3.2 Theoretical Basis

The framework is grounded in stress and behavioral theories. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, behavioral outcomes are influenced by perceived control. When employees feel unable to control workload or maintain balance, stress responses intensify.

Value-belief perspectives suggest that excessive prioritization of work-related values over personal values may create imbalance and psychological strain.

Additionally, occupational stress literature indicates that prolonged job demands without adequate recovery lead to burnout. Therefore, work-life balance dimensions are logically positioned as predictors of emotional exhaustion.

3.3 Hypotheses Development

Work-Life Balance and Physical Demand

Work-life imbalance reduces recovery time and increases fatigue. Employees experiencing neglect of personal life and dominance of work are more likely to experience exhaustion. Similarly, over-commitment intensifies physical strain.

Therefore:

H1: Work-life balance has a significant influence on physical demand among IT professionals in Chennai.

Relationship between Individual Dimensions and Physical Demand

Each work-life balance dimension is expected to show a significant relationship with physical demand.

H1a: Neglecting life has a significant relationship with physical demand.

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H1b: Work dominance has a significant relationship with physical demand.
H1c: Making time for oneself has a significant relationship with physical demand.
H1d: Work-life harmony has a significant relationship with physical demand.
H1e: Over-commitment has a significant relationship with physical demand.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive and correlational research design. The descriptive approach is used to examine IT professionals' perceptions regarding work-life balance dimensions and physical demand. The correlational design is employed to analyze the relationship between work-life balance dimensions and emotional exhaustion.

The study is quantitative in nature and uses primary data to test the proposed hypotheses.

4.2 Population and Sampling

Target Population

The target population consists of IT professionals working in major IT hubs in Chennai, including OMR (Old Mahabalipuram Road), Siruseri SIPCOT IT Park, and DLF IT Park.

Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling method was adopted due to accessibility constraints and the availability of respondents through professional networks and online platforms.

Sample Size

A total of 120 IT professionals participated in the study.

4.3 Data Collection Instrument

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into two sections:

Section A – Demographic Profile

Includes variables such as age, gender, experience, designation, and working hours.

Section B – Study Variables

The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from:

1 – Strongly Disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Neutral
4 – Agree
5 – Strongly Agree

The instrument measured:

Work-Life Balance Dimensions (Independent Variables)

1. Neglecting Life (4 items)
2. Work Dominance (4 items)
3. Making Time for Oneself (4 items)
4. Work-Life Harmony (4 items)
5. Over-Commitment (4 items)

Emotional Exhaustion (Dependent Variable)

Physical Demand (measured using relevant exhaustion-related statements).

4.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. A Cronbach's Alpha value

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greater than 0.70 is considered acceptable for research purposes.

The constructs used in this study meet the reliability threshold, indicating consistency among measurement items.

Validity

Content validity was ensured through expert review from academic professionals in business administration and human resource management. The questionnaire items were framed based on established literature related to work-life balance and emotional exhaustion.

4.5 Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed both online and offline to IT professionals in Chennai. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and confidentiality of responses was assured. Data collection was conducted over a structured period to ensure adequate response rate.

4.6 Statistical Tools Used

Data were analyzed using SPSS software. The following statistical techniques were applied:

1. Descriptive Statistics

- Mean
- Standard Deviation

Used to analyze employee perceptions of work-life balance dimensions.

2. Pearson Correlation Analysis

Used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between work-life balance dimensions and physical demand.

3. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Used to examine the effect of work-life balance dimensions on physical demand and to identify the strongest predictors of emotional exhaustion.

4.7 Model Specification

The regression model used in the study is expressed as:

Physical Demand = β_0 + β_1(Neglecting Life) + β_2(Work Dominance) + β_3(Making Time for Oneself) + β_4(Work-Life Harmony) + β_5(Over-Commitment) + ε

Where:

β_0 = Constant

β_1–β_5 = Regression coefficients

ε = Error term

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Employee opinion towards the Neglecting life

Neglecting Life	Mean	Std. Deviation
I postpone personal activities because of work.	3.50	0.98
Even simple daily task don't get done due to workload.	3.61	0.95
My job prevents me from social obligations.	3.50	0.89
Work pressure stops me from spending time on myself.	3.60	0.78

Interpretation

The table 1 shows the employees' opinion towards neglecting life. Neglecting life was analysed with 4 statements in the five point Likert scale. The collected data are analysed with mean and

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standard deviation values. The calculated mean values ranged from 3.50 to 3.61. The calculated standard deviation values lie between 0.78 to 0.98.

From the mean values it is observed that even simple daily tasks don't get done due to workload (3.61) is ranked first, followed by work pressure stops me from spending time on myself (3.60), Them often skip or postpone personal activities because of work (3.50) and their job prevents them from fulfilling family or social obligations (3.50). From the standard deviation values it is found that employees' opinion towards neglecting life appear to be similar. It is inferred that workload and work pressure considerably affect employees' ability to attend to personal and family life.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Employee opinion towards the Work dominance

Work Dominance	Mean	Std. Deviation
My life feels dominated by job responsibilities.	3.46	0.89
Most of my time is consumed by work matters.	3.24	0.92
I rarely feel that I have a life outside of work.	3.77	0.94
It seems like life is equivalent to working.	3.82	0.86

The Table 2 shows the employees' opinion towards work dominance. Work dominance was analysed with 4 statements in the five point Likert scale. The collected data are analysed with mean and standard deviation values. The calculated mean values ranged from 3.24 to 3.82. The calculated standard deviation values lie between 0.86 to 0.94.

From the mean values it is observed that it seems like life is equivalent to working (3.82) is ranked first, followed by them rarely feel that they have a life outside of work (3.77), their life feels dominated by job responsibilities (3.46) and most of their time is consumed by work matters (3.24). From the standard deviation values it is found that employees' opinion towards work dominance appear to be similar. It is inferred that employees perceive a strong dominance of work over their personal life.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Employee opinion towards the Making time for oneself

Making Time For Oneself	Mean	Std. Deviation
I manage to create space for hobbies are personal interests.	3.70	0.98
I set aside time for rest and relaxation during the week.	3.61	0.96
I can still engage leisure or cultural activities despite work.	3.97	0.89
I find opportunities to do things purely for myself.	3.29	0.84

The Table 3 shows the employees' opinion towards making time for oneself. Making time for oneself was analysed with 4 statements in the five point Likert scale. The collected data are analysed with mean and standard deviation values. The calculated mean values ranged from 3.29 to 3.97. The calculated standard deviation values lie between 0.84 to 0.98.

From the mean values it is observed that they can still engage in leisure or cultural activities

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despite work (3.97) is ranked first, followed by they manage to create space for hobbies or personal interests (3.70), they set aside time for rest and relaxation during the week (3.61) and they find opportunities to do things purely for myself (3.29). From the standard deviation values it is found that employees' opinion towards making time for oneself appear to be similar. It is inferred that though work pressure exists, employees moderately attempt to create personal time.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Employee opinion towards the Work life harmony

Work Life Harmony	Mean	Std. Deviation
My work and personal life fit together in a balanced way.	3.57	0.87
The demands of work and non-work life are consistent with each other.	3.64	0.78
I feel satisfied with how my job and personal life integrate.	3.97	0.98
I maintain harmony between working and living.	3.35	0.97

The Table 4 shows the employees' opinion towards work life harmony. Work life harmony was analysed with 4 statements in the five point Likert scale. The collected data are analysed with mean and standard deviation values. The calculated mean values ranged from 3.35 to 3.97. The calculated standard deviation values lie between 0.78 to 0.98.

From the mean values it is observed that they feel satisfied with how my job and personal life integrate (3.97) is ranked first, followed by the demands of work and non-work life are consistent with each other (3.64), my work and personal life fit together in a balanced way (3.57) and they maintain harmony between working and living (3.35). From the standard deviation values it is found that employees' opinion towards work life harmony appear to be similar. It is inferred that employees moderately perceive balance and integration between work and personal life.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Employee opinion towards the Over commitment

Over Commitment	Mean	Std. Deviation
I often take work tasks home .	3.37	0.85
My work obligations extend into evenings or weekends.	3.30	0.97
I think about job issues when I should be resting.	3.54	0.88
Work continues to occupy my personal time more than I would like.	3.90	0.96

The Table 5 shows the employees' opinion towards over commitment. Over commitment was analysed with 4 statements in the five point Likert scale. The collected data are analysed with mean and standard deviation values. The calculated mean values ranged from 3.30 to 3.90. The calculated standard deviation values lie between 0.85 to 0.97.

From the mean values it is observed that work continues to occupy my personal time more than they would like (3.90) is ranked first, followed by they think about job issues when they should be resting (3.54), they often take work tasks home (3.37) and their work obligations extend into evenings or weekends (3.30). From the standard deviation values it is found that employees' opinion towards over commitment appear to be similar. It is inferred that employees experience a considerable level of over commitment, where work frequently intrudes into their personal time.

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Table 6: Relationship between Work Life Balance and Physical Demand

Work Life Balance	Physical Demand	
	r- value	P – value
Neglecting life	0.349	.001
Work dominance	0.541	.001
Making time for oneself	0.667	.001
Work life harmony	0.427	.001
Over commitment	0.768	.001

It is hypothesised that WLB have relationship between physical demand

To test the above stated hypothesis, Pearson correlation test is applied. The result is displayed in table 6. The calculated p-values for various work life balance dimensions with physical demand are found to be significant (P = 0.001). Hence the above stated hypothesis is accepted. Further the correlation values have been ranged between 0.349 and 0.768.

From the r-values it is observed that over commitment has secured the highest positive value (r = 0.768) with physical demand followed by making time for oneself (r = 0.667), work dominance (r = 0.541), work life harmony (r = 0.427) and neglecting life (r = 0.349).

From this information it is inferred that work life balance dimensions have been positively related with physical demand. Over commitment shows strong positive relationship with physical demand, making time for oneself shows strong positive relationship, work dominance shows moderate positive relationship, work life harmony shows moderate positive relationship and neglecting life shows low positive relationship with physical demand.

Table 7: The Effect of Work Life Balance on Physical Demand

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	P-ve
1	.655[a]	.430	.422	56.943	.001

Predictors		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-ve	P-ve
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.197	.158		26.562	.001
	Neglecting life	.374	.035	.420	4.910	.001
	Work dominance	.123	.029	.232	4.219	.001
	Making time for oneself	.415	.045	.216	.335	.001
	Work life harmony	.074	.038	.254	4.569	.001
	Over commitment	024	.012	.249	10.306	.001

H1: Work Life Balance has significant effect on Physical Demand.

In order to test the above stated hypothesis, multiple linear regression analysis is executed. Here the dimensions of work life balance are considered as independent variables and physical demand has been considered as the dependent variable. The result is displayed in Table – 7.

From the ANOVA model summary result, the adjusted R^2 value is found to be 0.422 and the

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corresponding F-value is 56.943 with a P-value of 0.001, which is significant at one percent level. Thus, the above stated hypothesis has been accepted. The adjusted R^2 value denotes the level of influence between work life balance and physical demand. It is expressed by the following regression equation.

Physical Demand = 4.197 + 0.374 (Neglecting life) + 0.123 (Work dominance) + 0.415 (Making time for oneself) + 0.074 (Work life harmony) + 0.024 (Over commitment).

From the regression equation, it is inferred that neglecting life, work dominance, making time for oneself, work life harmony and over commitment have positive effect on physical demand. Since all the predictor variables have p-value less than 0.01, it is found that all the dimensions of work life balance have significant effect on physical demand.

6. Findings and Suggestions

6.1 Findings

Based on the descriptive, correlation, and regression analysis, the following findings are derived:

1. **Neglecting Life**
   Employees moderately agree that workload prevents them from completing personal tasks and fulfilling social obligations. The mean values (3.50–3.61) indicate that work pressure significantly affects personal and family life.
2. **Work Dominance**
   Respondents perceive that work strongly dominates their lives. The highest mean (3.82) for "life is equivalent to working" indicates a strong imbalance between professional and personal domains.
3. **Making Time for Oneself**
   Although employees attempt to engage in leisure and relaxation activities (mean = 3.97), the overall results suggest only moderate success in maintaining personal time.
4. **Work-Life Harmony**
   Employees moderately perceive integration between work and personal life. However, harmony is not strong enough to prevent exhaustion.
5. **Over-Commitment**
   Over-commitment recorded high mean values (up to 3.90), indicating that work frequently intrudes into personal time. Employees often think about work even during rest periods.
6. **Relationship between Work-Life Balance and Physical Demand**
   All dimensions of work-life balance show a significant positive relationship with physical demand ($p = 0.001$).
   - Over-commitment shows the strongest relationship ($r = 0.768$).
   - Making time for oneself shows strong positive relationship ($r = 0.667$).
   - Work dominance shows moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.541$).
   - Work-life harmony shows moderate relationship ($r = 0.427$).
   - Neglecting life shows low positive relationship ($r = 0.349$).
7. **Effect of Work-Life Balance on Physical Demand**
   Regression results indicate that work-life balance explains 42.2% of the variance in physical demand (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.422$).

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All five dimensions significantly influence physical demand ($p < 0.01$). Over-commitment emerges as the strongest predictor of physical demand.

6.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. Organizations should monitor and regulate excessive workload to reduce over-commitment among IT professionals.
2. Flexible working hours and hybrid scheduling policies should be implemented to improve work-life balance.
3. Management should discourage after-hours communication unless absolutely necessary.
4. Wellness programs and stress management workshops should be conducted regularly.
5. Employees should be encouraged to take adequate rest breaks and annual leave.
6. Organizations may introduce workload distribution strategies to prevent physical strain.
7. Awareness programs should educate employees about maintaining boundaries between work and personal life.

7.Conclusion

The present study examined the determinants of emotional exhaustion among IT professionals in Chennai, with particular emphasis on work-life balance dimensions and their influence on physical demand. The findings clearly indicate that work-life balance plays a significant role in influencing emotional exhaustion.

The descriptive results reveal that IT professionals experience noticeable levels of work dominance and over-commitment. Employees frequently report that work interferes with personal activities, social obligations, and rest time. Although respondents moderately attempt to maintain personal time and work-life harmony, the dominance of work responsibilities remains substantial.

The correlation analysis confirms that all dimensions of work-life balance have a significant positive relationship with physical demand. Over-commitment emerged as the strongest factor associated with physical strain, followed by making time for oneself and work dominance. This suggests that when employees are excessively committed to work and unable to psychologically detach, physical exhaustion increases considerably.

The regression results further strengthen these findings. Work-life balance dimensions collectively explain 42.2% of the variance in physical demand. All five dimensions—neglecting life, work dominance, making time for oneself, work-life harmony, and over-commitment—significantly influence physical demand. Among them, over-commitment is identified as the most influential predictor.

The study concludes that emotional exhaustion among IT professionals in Chennai is strongly linked to imbalance between professional and personal life. Organizations must therefore implement structured work-life balance policies, manage workload effectively, and promote employee well-being initiatives. Sustainable productivity in the IT sector depends not only on technological advancement but also on maintaining a healthy and balanced workforce.

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