

FACTORS AFFECTING MENTAL WELL-BEING OF REMOTE WORKING
FEMALES IN THE INDIAN IT SECTOR

by

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DISSERTATION

Presented to the Swiss School of Business and Management Geneva

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

SWISS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT GENEVA

<SEPTEMBER, 2025>

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father, who prioritised their family's needs over their mental and physical well-being while managing a household and having two children. Additionally, this work is dedicated to my husband, daughter, and friends, who provided support and encouragement throughout this journey. The objective of this thesis is to contribute to a better understanding of the mental well-being of working women, who often focus on their families and office but may neglect their self-care.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Rumiya Agashe, for her unwavering support, insightful guidance, and constant encouragement throughout this doctoral journey. Your patience, knowledge, and commitment to excellence have been instrumental in shaping this work.

I am sincerely thankful to the research committee members, Dr. Iva Buljubašić and Dr. Ljiljana Kukec and Head of Research, Dr. Anna Provodnikova at SSBM, Geneva, for their valuable feedback and thought-provoking suggestions, which have enriched the depth and clarity of this research.

A special thanks to the participants and professionals who generously shared their time, experiences, and perspectives during the data collection process. Without their openness and trust, this study would not have been possible.

I am deeply grateful to my family for their love, patience, and sacrifice, especially to my parents, Dr. Meenal Fuladi, Advocate Uday Fuladi, husband Kapil Singhai and daughter Runzhun Singhai, who stood by me during the most demanding phases of this journey. Your belief in me gave me the strength to persevere.

To my friends, peers, and colleagues, thank you for the discussions, the laughter, and the quiet encouragement that kept me going. Your presence, near or far, made this path more meaningful. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the emotional, mental, and sometimes spiritual strength that carried me through this endeavour. This thesis is not only a reflection of academic effort but also a testament to the collective support of every individual who believed in me.

ABSTRACT

<FACTORS AFFECTING MENTAL WELL-BEING OF REMOTE WORKING FEMALES IN THE INDIAN IT SECTOR>

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Background

The rise of remote and hybrid work in India's IT sector has reshaped the professional landscape for women. While offering flexibility in form, these models often reinforce deeper structural pressures—eroding work-life boundaries, amplifying caregiving burdens, and leaving gender-specific health needs invisible. This study explores how these complex and intersecting factors impact women's mental well-being and what organisational mechanisms can be implemented to create more inclusive and supportive work environments.

Methods

A layered, explanatory approach was employed to capture both individual experiences and organisational patterns. Insights were derived from women's reflections and organisational realities, presenting a cohesive understanding of the remote work ecosystem and its gendered effects.

Results

Remote work is frequently perceived as liberating, but it often blurs personal and professional boundaries, leading to emotional fatigue and loss of recovery time. Caregiving responsibilities, particularly for children and elderly family members, are intensified without structured institutional support. Menstruation and menopause-related challenges remain largely unaddressed, resulting in discomfort, disengagement, and silence. A lack of empathetic communication, informal interaction, and recognition further isolates women, diminishing their sense of belonging and visibility in virtual settings.

However, where organisations demonstrate sensitivity to life-stage needs, offer flexibility grounded in empathy, and maintain clear, inclusive communication, women report stronger psychological safety and greater job satisfaction. When leadership is emotionally intelligent and policies are intentionally inclusive, the mental well-being of women improves meaningfully, enabling greater engagement, retention, and performance.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings challenge the assumption that flexibility alone ensures equity. Mental well-being is not a by-product of remote access, but a reflection of how work is structured, led, and culturally supported. Sustainable support requires acknowledging the full range of gendered experiences, across caregiving, reproductive health, and virtual visibility, and incorporating this understanding into policy, leadership development, and daily practice.

This research provides a strategic blueprint for the IT sector: codifying reproductive and caregiving policies, empowering managers through inclusive training, ensuring visibility

for remote contributors, and fostering cultures of psychological safety. These changes not only support the mental health of women but also position organisations as adaptive, equitable, and future-ready employers.

KEYWORDS

Mental Well-being, Menstruation, Menopause, Motherhood, Organisational Policies

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IT	Information Technology
HR	Human Resources
WFH	Work From Home
GAD-7	Generalised Anxiety Disorder Scale-7
PSS	Perceived Stress Scale
UWES	Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
EAP	Employee Assistance Program

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a rise in remote work globally, including in the IT software industry in India. This shift has been important for ensuring business continuity and safeguarding employees' health. The industry significantly contributes to the Indian economy and includes various domains, such as software development, hardware manufacturing, cybersecurity, data analysis, cloud computing, AI, digital marketing, E-commerce, gaming, entertainment, IT consulting, and services. Despite the positive impact of remote work on enhancing work-life balance and job satisfaction, female employees in the IT sector may face challenges such as isolation, blurred boundaries, and technological obstacles.

As of the year 2023, the Indian IT industry employed over 4.5 million people, with women comprising approximately 36% of the workforce (NASSCOM, 2023). Regardless of the progress, challenges remain in achieving inclusive growth and equity, particularly for women traversing complex workplaces. For remote work, these challenges are expanded, as women in India's IT sector often experience stressors that deter their mental well-being and workplace engagement. This research aims to discover the connection between gender, mental health, and workplace policies, focusing on the impact of remote work stressors and key life stages of motherhood, menstruation, and menopause on women's mental well-being and their overall engagement in the workplace.

In India, women in the workforce, including those in the IT industry, are making significant contributions. However, they continue to come across gender bias, unequal pay, and the struggle to balance work with family responsibilities (Kulkarni and Havaladar, 2024). Efforts to promote gender equality and create an inclusive work environment are underway to improve the status of

working females. The ongoing societal transformation towards gender equality and empowerment is encouraging a more supportive environment for women in the Indian workforce, including those in the IT sector.

Remote work provides flexibility but has been linked to increased stress due to the blurred boundaries between professional and personal life. In India, remote work has surged since the pandemic, particularly within the IT sector. Societal expectations and responsibilities, including caregiving, female health concerns, and managing menopausal symptoms, add stressors (Kanojia, 2024). As per the study done by IIMA, the majority of the Indian workforce, that is 64% reported challenges in balancing work and home duties, with many experiencing feelings of isolation and stress due to remote work (IIMA, 2024).

Additionally, Significant barriers concerning menstruation and menopause are confronted by Indian women in the IT sector, which is argued within workplace policies. According to the research by Manhas (2024), women employees in India reported that menstruation-related symptoms, including fatigue and discomfort, negatively impacted their work performance. As per the study by Chitrao and Pandey (2024), the menopausal transition is experienced by many women between the ages of 40 and 55 and is often ignored in workplace health and wellness initiatives, despite its extreme impact on mental health and work performance.

This research used a mixed-methods approach, mixing quantitative surveys to measure mental well-being and workplace engagement with qualitative interviews to capture the existing experiences of women navigating remote work and key life stages. By examining these issues within the context of India's IT sector, this study provided insights into how inclusive growth and equity policies can be suggested to address these stressors and foster a more supportive work environment for women. The findings contributed to the academic addressing of gender, mental

health, and workplace policies, providing evidence-based advice for IT organisations seeking to create more inclusive and unbiased workplaces for women.

1.2. Research Problem

There is a significant gap in addressing the stressors faced by women in remote work settings, mental well-being and workplace engagement despite the progress of women's participation in India's IT sector. Remote work offers flexibility but also introduces challenges, including work-life imbalance, isolation, and the fading of gendered responsibilities, especially for women who frequently juggle between caregiving duties, health-related concerns, and menopausal transitions. These stressors are intensified due to a lack of suitable, inclusive policies that focus on the diverse needs of women at different life stages.

The absence of inclusive policies in India that address issues including menstruation, motherhood, and menopause creates an environment where women's health and well-being are negatively impacted, which affects both productivity and engagement at the workplace. For example, menstruation and menopause symptoms are often considered taboo subjects in the workplace, which leads to a lack of support for women going through these challenges. Lower job satisfaction, reduced retention, and increased mental health issues like stress and anxiety are caused by the result due to reduced well-being.

Recent studies suggest that remote work can worsen these issues, as women face increased pressures to balance professional workload with personal duties. As per the study by the International Labour Organisation (2020), remote work correlates to increased stress levels for women who manage home duties and childcare responsibilities. In the Indian IT sector, these challenges are particularly obvious as remote working is the standard in recent times.

There is a gap in addressing these stressors, which highlights the need for targeted, inclusive growth and equity policies that consider the basic needs of women and identify the importance of mental well-being and workplace engagement. These policies should be included to create a supportive environment for women's personal and professional roles. The mental health and productivity of women in the IT sector are likely to remain compromised, which hampers their full participation and growth within the industry without any structured framework.

This research found the stressors faced by remotely working women in the Indian IT sector, focusing on the effects of motherhood, menstruation, and menopause, and investigated how inclusive policies can address these challenges. This study aimed to contribute to the development of policies that promote a healthier, more reasonable work environment for women by identifying the obstacles to mental well-being and engagement.

1.3. Research Objectives

The primary aim of this research was to identify the stressors faced by women in India's IT sector working remotely, particularly focusing on the impact of key life stages of motherhood, menstruation, and menopause on their mental well-being and workplace engagement. By identifying and understanding these stressors, the study seeks to propose inclusive growth and equity policies that can enhance women's mental health, productivity, and overall engagement of women in remote work settings. The specific objectives of this study were as follows:

- i. To identify the stressors faced by women in India's IT sector working remotely.

This objective aimed to examine the various stressors that women experience while working remotely in the IT sector. These stressors may include work management, balancing professional and personal responsibilities, social isolation, and the impact of caregiving roles, among others.

ii. To evaluate the impact of key life stages of motherhood, menstruation, and menopause on women's mental well-being in the workplace.

This objective focuses on understanding how motherhood, menstruation, and menopause affect the mental health of women in the IT sector. It aimed to investigate the physical and emotional challenges that women experience during these life stages and how these challenges impact their productivity, job satisfaction, and overall well-being.

iii. To evaluate the role of remote work in worsening these stressors for women in the IT sector.

This objective sought to assess how remote work conditions elaborate existing stressors and create new challenges, particularly in the context of India's IT sector. It explored the interplay between remote work and the difficulties women face in balancing professional commitments with personal and family responsibilities.

iv. To explore the existing policies and practices within India's IT sector related to gender inclusivity, mental well-being, and support for women in key life stages.

This objective aims to identify current policies and practices that address women's mental health, well-being, and workplace engagement in the IT sector, particularly those that relate to remote work and support for issues like menstruation, motherhood, and menopause. The research assessed the effectiveness and gaps in these policies.

v. To recommend inclusive growth and equity policies that can address women's mental well-being and workplace engagement in remote work settings.

The final objective was to recommend policies that can reasonably address the stressors identified in the research. These recommendations were aimed at developing a more supportive, inclusive, and equitable workplace for remotely working women in India's IT sector.

By addressing these objectives, this study contributed to the development of evidence-based strategies and policies that can better support women in IT sector, leading to improved mental well-being, engagement, and long-term success in their careers. The findings provided valuable insights for organisations seeking to create a more inclusive and supportive workplace for women in the rapidly evolving remote workforce.

1.4. Research Questions

This study aimed to address the complex relationship between remote work stressors, gender-specific challenges, and mental well-being in the Indian IT sector. The following research questions guided the analysis:

RQ1. What are the key stressors that remote working women face in the Indian IT sector?

This question sought to identify the various stressors that women encounter in remote work settings. It explored issues such as work-life balance, professional isolation, and the connection of personal and professional responsibilities that may affect their mental health and workplace engagement.

RQ2. How do motherhood, menstruation, and menopause affect the mental well-being and productivity of women in the IT sector?

This question aimed to analyse the impact of key life stages on the mental health, work performance, and engagement of women working remotely in the IT sector. It investigated the physical and emotional challenges associated with these life stages and explored how they influence women's experiences at work.

RQ3. In what ways does remote work increase the stressors faced by women during these key life stages?

This question explored the worsening effects of remote work on women's mental health and engagement, concerning the challenges posed by motherhood, menstruation, and menopause. It was also considered how remote work may alter or compound existing barriers for women in the IT sector.

RQ4. What policies and practices currently exist in India's IT sector to address gender-specific challenges and support women's mental well-being in remote work environments?

This question evaluated the effectiveness of current workplace policies intended to address the needs of women, especially in remote work settings. It was to explore the extent to which existing initiatives provide support for issues like menstruation, maternity, and menopause, as well as mental health concerns.

RQ5. What inclusive growth and equity policies can be implemented to improve the mental well-being, workplace engagement, and overall career satisfaction of women in India's IT sector?

This question aims to identify the actionable policy recommendations that can create a more inclusive and supportive work environment for remotely working women in the IT sector. The research explored how to incorporate mental health and gender inclusivity into workplace practices for remote work settings.

The study aimed to provide a complete understanding of the challenges faced by women in India's IT sector and provide actionable insights to improve their mental well-being, workplace engagement, and career development. The answers to these questions can be used to recommend

inclusive policies that can be adopted with a more unbiased and supportive work environment for women.

1.5. Significance of Study

This study has the potential to address critical gaps in understanding and supporting the mental well-being of female employees in the IT sector. This research is vital for several reasons:

1.5.1. Enhancing Organisational Policies and Practices

The IT sector often lacks inclusive policies that address the unique challenges faced by female employees. This study identified the specific stressors related to remote work, motherhood, menstruation, and menopause, which provided evidence-based insights that can be shared with companies to develop more inclusive and supportive workplace policies. Implementing these policies can lead to:

- **Improved Employee Retention:** Organisations can reduce turnover rates and retain valuable talent by addressing the needs of female employees
- **Increased Productivity:** Higher productivity and job satisfaction can be achieved by supportive policies, which can help mitigate stress and improve mental well-being.
- **Enhanced Reputation:** Companies that give priority to gender inclusivity and mental health are likely to attract top talent and improve their reputation as desirable employers.

1.5.2. Promoting Gender Equality and Inclusivity

By addressing gender-specific challenges, this study highlights the importance of creating an equitable work environment where women can thrive. Organisations can:

- **Reduce Gender Bias:** Policies can be implemented that support women in their key life stages, which can help reduce gender bias and promote an inclusive workplace culture.
- **Support Career Advancement:** Women can pursue career advancement opportunities without compromising their well-being by providing accommodations for their health-related issues and caregiving responsibilities.
- **Foster Diversity:** Innovation can be driven, and organisational performance can be improved by a diverse workforce, which brings varied perspectives and ideas.

1.5.3. Improving Women's Health and Well-Being

The mental well-being of female employees is often linked to their overall health and quality of life. This study focuses on the need for organisations to:

- **Address Health-Related Challenges:** The well-being of female employees can be significantly improved by addressing and accommodating the health-related challenges associated with menstruation, menopause, and motherhood.
- **Provide Mental Health Support:** Women can be helped in managing stress and maintaining a healthy work-life balance by giving them access to mental health resources like counselling and support groups.
- **Encourage Work-Life Balance:** Women can balance their professional and personal responsibilities, reduce stress and enhance overall well-being with the help of flexible work arrangements and supportive policies.

1.5.4. Contributing to Academic Knowledge

This research has contributed to the academic dissertation on gender, mental health, and workplace policies by offering specific insights for the challenges faced by women in India's IT sector. The findings could:

- **Fill Research Gaps:** By addressing the lack of research on gender-specific stressors in remote work settings in the Indian IT context.
- **Inform Future Research:** By providing a base for future studies on gender inclusivity and mental well-being in the workplace.
- **Guide Policy Development:** By offering evidence-based references that can inform the development of inclusive growth and equity policies at both organisational and governmental levels.

To summarise, this study was relevant to drive meaningful changes in organisational practices, promote gender equality, improve women's health and well-being, and contribute to the broader academic understanding of these critical issues. By addressing the unique challenges faced by women employees, the research aimed to create a more supportive and inclusive work environment that benefits both individuals and organisations in the IT sector.

CHAPTER II:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The literature review considered existing research on the connection between gender, remote work, and mental well-being, focusing specifically on women in India's IT sector. This section examined the challenges faced by remote working women, especially during key life stages like motherhood, menstruation, and menopause, and how these stressors affect their mental health and workplace engagement. Furthermore, the review observed current workplace policies aimed at supporting women in their life stages and the differences that exist in both literature and practice.

According to the study by Falótico and Dernbach (2023), the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered organisations to transition from office-based work to remote work, whereas Many IT companies in India are planning to continue this trend. The IT software industry is a major contributor to the Indian economy (Pallathadka et al., 2022). Women are playing a progressively important role in the IT industry, but still face challenges such as gender bias and unequal pay. Efforts are taken to promote gender equality and establish a more comprehensive workplace for women (Chakraborty, 2024).

2.2. Contribution of Women in the Indian IT Sector

The pandemic has caused a shift to work remotely for many companies, particularly India's IT industry. This IT industry is a major contributor to the economy and encompasses a wide range of technology-related pursuits (Shah and Barker, 2022). It is an important factor in shaping modern economies and societies through software development, hardware manufacturing, data analysis, and more. Its consistent innovation and adaptability significantly influence modern living and working (Bharat et al., 2021).

According to the study by Trinkenreich et al. (2022), Women's contribution is less than 24% of employees in the IT industry, and they experience several types of discrimination and unfairness. Although Indian society has, by tradition, placed importance on women's roles within the family and household, there has been a gradual shift towards more opportunities and acceptance for women in the workforce. Working women have experienced considerable changes and challenges over the years. Traditionally, women's roles in Indian society emphasise the household and family, with limited opportunities for formal employment. According to the study conducted by Mukhopadhyay (2021), working females are contributing to various sectors, including technology, healthcare, education, and more, by breaking traditional stereotypes and achieving success in their careers. Despite this progress, working women still face major challenges, including gender bias, unequal pay, and balancing work with social expectations of family responsibilities. Concentrating on Indian female workers is important for boosting India's economic growth, promoting social parity, reducing gender inequality, addressing talent shortages, and demonstrating strong corporate social responsibility (Deloitte, 2024).

As per the study led by the CFA Institute (2024), the IT sector has the highest number of women in the workforce, with 30% female participation. In the financial year 2021-22, financial services firms ranked second with 22.4% female participation. As the largest employer of the country's white-collar workforce, the IT sector is recognised for its relatively higher female representation. Moreover, the FMCG and industrial sectors have the lowest representation, with only 5.5% and 4.3% female participation, respectively.

2.3. Stressors of Remote Work for Women

After the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work has become a major aspect of professional life. While remote work offers flexibility and potential work-life balance, it also creates new stressors that can adversely affect women, particularly in the IT sector. According to the studies, remote work often causes stress for women due to the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life, the demands of caregiving, and feelings of isolation.

2.3.1. Work-Life Balance and Caregiving Responsibilities

According to a study done by Del Boca et al. (2020), women are more likely to experience work-life balance stress in remote settings as compared to men. This is particularly true for women in caregiving roles, which often include responsibilities such as child raising, eldercare, and household management. In India, the societal expectations from women to manage both family and career lead to additional loads in remote work surroundings, where the physical separation of work and home is reduced (Gupta and Shrivastava, 2020). Women in the IT sector, who already experience long working hours and intense job demands, find it difficult to manage these responsibilities while maintaining productivity.

According to the study delivered by Subha et al. (2021), it is important to identify the important contribution of women in India's IT sector and to understand the unique difficulties they face when working remotely. Remote work has caused advantages and disadvantages for female employees in the Indian IT sector. Although it offers more flexibility and better work-life balance, it can also result in feelings of isolation and technological difficulties (Graevenstein, 2023).

As per the study delivered by Oakman et al. (2020), the effects of working from home vary person to person regarding mental and physical health. It recommends regular communication between

managers and teams to help reduce feelings of isolation. The study done by Viertiö et al. (2021) observes that having a pleasant work and family life is essential for the psychological well-being of both men and women. Isolation and job dissatisfaction are connected to psychological stress, and the negative effects of isolation have been remarkably clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. This topic needs more awareness of the mental health policies of the company, enhancement in mental health awareness in the workplace and an augmented approach to mental health support.

2.3.2. Isolation and Lack of Social Support

Remote working can often lead to professional isolation, which can increase the stress for women who miss the social interactions and networking opportunities available in hybrid and onsite work settings. According to the research by Parent et al. (2021) indicates that the lack of one-to-one in-person connections can lead to feelings of disconnection, which affect both mental well-being and job satisfaction. The IT sector is known for its highly competitive and demanding environment, which often increases feelings of isolation, as employees are expected to meet close-fitting deadlines and work independently. This isolation is exacerbated for women, who may already be unable to manage in male-dominated tech spaces.

2.3.3. Increased Stress Due to Workload and Performance Expectations

Remotely working women in the IT sector are expected to show high levels of productivity and deliverables without the structured support systems present in offices. According to Hoff and Lee (2021), women in the technology sector working remotely report higher levels of burnout compared to their male colleagues. Women are inclined to take over additional emotional labour in the form of managing team dynamics and maintaining a positive work atmosphere, which can contribute to their stress. These factors can impact their mental well-being, resulting in feelings of burnout and tiredness.

2.4. Impact of Key Life Stages on Mental Well-Being

The key life stages of motherhood, menstruation, and menopause have significant physical, emotional, and mental effects on women. Although the challenges associated with these life stages are often ignored in the workplace policies and research. This is particularly relevant for women, where high performance and productivity are expected while working remotely in the IT sector.

2.4.1. Motherhood and Mental Well-Being

Motherhood is one of the most important life stages for any woman, and it can greatly affect mental well-being. Sharma and Dhir (2022) mentioned that mothers in the workforce repeatedly have a feeling of guilt, stress, and anxiety as they cross the dual roles of caregiving and professional duties. Although policies such as paid maternity leave exist, the support provided by organisations fails when providing ongoing accommodations for flexible hours or remote work options. The IT sector has long working hours and high demands, which place additional strain on working mothers. Franzoi et al. (2024) found that women who returned to work postpartum felt they received inadequate support, with many reporting stress and burnout due to the lack of family-friendly policies in their workplaces.

Chung (2020) emphasised the importance of encouraging actions to improve the well-being, company policies and mental health of remote working females. Flexible work hours and managing household duties are important for the work-life balance. By regular virtual check-ins with colleagues and team-building activities, isolation can be reduced. The companies that provide crèche for childcare assistance and accommodate family needs notice increased mental health outcomes from employees, as well as those that provide resources for ergonomic home office setups.

Danish Mirza (2024) mentioned the importance of providing mental health services, like counselling services and dedicated days to revitalise. It is important to maintain equal opportunities for career progress, rewards, and recognition. Providing flexible work hours, prioritising work-life balance, and enhancing a supportive and inclusive work environment to support the well-being of female employees working remotely is important.

2.4.2. Menstruation and Workplace Challenges

Menstrual symptoms such as pain, fatigue, and emotional distress are commonly experienced by women in the workforce. Although menstruation is viewed as taboo in many workplaces, the lack of understanding and support for women facing discomfort can negatively affect their mental well-being. Hoef (2023) stated that higher pain levels due to menstruation negatively affect performance, but Al-Harbi and Alrahili (2020) mentioned that most respondents (60%) felt that their attentiveness remained unchanged. Moreover, a similar percentage (59%) believed that they worked less than they typically did. In the remote work setting, women are expected to manage their professional responsibilities without any support systems. These challenges can be even more evident. Menstrual discomfort and related mental health issues may be ignored in remote work policies, leading to a lack of understanding for affected employees.

2.4.3. Menopause and Workplace Engagement

Menopause is a significant life stage that can affect women's mental health. While menopausal transitioning, women may experience physical and emotional symptoms, including hot flashes, sleep disturbances, and mood swings, which can depressingly affect their work performance. O'Neill (2023) found that 65% of women in the workforce reported that menopausal symptoms significantly impacted their work performance and job satisfaction. Although menopause is often ignored in workplace wellness programs, women can feel uninterested in discussing their

symptoms due to fear of dishonour or being realistic as less capable in their roles. The lack of in-person backing and understanding could make managing menopausal symptoms even more challenging, affecting mental well-being and workplace engagement.

2.5. Policies and Practices Addressing Gender-Specific Challenges

In recent times, the Indian IT sector has increased focus on a gender-inclusive workplace. While policies such as maternity leave, flexible working, and childcare support are being implemented in some organisations, they often fail to effectively address the challenges that women face during their key life stages in remote work settings.

2.5.1. Maternity Leave and Flexible Work Options

The Maternity Benefit Act (2017) has mandated that women in India are entitled to 26 weeks of paid maternity leave. Although the policy advanced in supporting working mothers, it does not fully address the challenges that women face once back to work. The Act mandates crèche facilities in organisations with 50 or more employees, still it is not included in many companies. A recent Supreme Court judgment (May 23, 2025) explains that this Act does not restrict any woman with more than two children from opting for maternity leave, emphasising that restrictions could demoralise reproductive rights. Women working in the IT sector can find it difficult to balance work and family without sufficient support. Some companies are implementing more flexible working options, including remote work and flexible hours, but these policies are not always targeted at the needs of mothers back to work. PwC (2020) found that 72% of organisations reported offering flexible working arrangements, but only 40% provided support for working mothers.

2.5.2. Menstrual Health Policies

Some organisations have started recognising the impact of menstrual symptoms on women's workplace experiences, but policies addressing menstrual health remain largely ignored. Menstruation is often seen as a private or taboo subject in the workplace, even if some companies have offered paid menstrual leave. Krithika (2023) found that only 12 Indian companies have implemented menstrual leave as a part of their official listed policies. The lack of support can increase the stress for women dealing with menstrual discomfort, especially in remote work settings where the lack of in-person presence may lead to misunderstandings.

2.5.3. Menopause Awareness and Support

Menopause is often overlooked in workplace policies, despite its significant effect on women's mental well-being. A study done by the Women's Health Foundation (2021) discovered that only 15% of companies in India had formal policies addressing menopause. The lack of organisational support while working remotely can lead to feelings of isolation and negligence. Companies that fail to accept the challenges related to menopause may unintentionally contribute to the fading of women's mental health and workplace engagement.

2.6. Gaps in Literature

Even though there is much research on remote work, gender-specific challenges, and mental well-being, there are still significant gaps in the literature considering the three life stages of women, particularly in the context of India's IT sector. Most of the studies on remote work focus on general employee stress, without specifically addressing the unique challenges faced by women during life stages such as motherhood, menstruation, and menopause. Moreover, much of the research on gender equity and mental health in India's IT sector remains frail.

There is less research that studies the link between stressors, remote work, and mental well-being that women go through in the IT sector. The companies should identify these probable effects and take some measures to support the mental well-being of female employees working remotely in the IT sector. Although the overall impact of remote work has been studied, there is limited information on the specific challenges faced by female employees in the Indian IT sector (Hosseini et.al., 2024).

This research examined the specific challenges faced by women in India's IT sector, focusing on remote work settings and three life-stage-related stressors. It has contributed to both academic literature and industry practice by providing evidence-based insights and policy recommendations to address the mental health and well-being of women working remotely in the IT sector.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Approach

This section summarises the research design and methodology employed to study the impact of remote work stressors, particularly those related to three life stages: motherhood, menstruation, and menopause, on the mental well-being and workplace engagement of women in India's IT sector.

A mixed-methods research design was adopted to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences faced by remotely working women in India's IT sector. The qualitative component helped in identifying key stressors and their impact on mental well-being, while the quantitative component provided statistical facts about the stressors and their impact on mental well-being and engagement. Together, it helped to gain insights and suggestions on how workplace policies could be further enhanced to support the mental health of working women at various life stages, to have better productivity and work-life balance.

3.1.1. Qualitative Approach

The qualitative phase of the research involved one-to-one interviews with open-ended questions to gain deeper insights on how women felt about their workplace policies and their relation to their mental health, productivity and work-life balance. The questions were constructed based on previous literature on gender and remote work challenges, work-life balance, and health-related work stressors faced by women, particularly in the IT sector (Kossel et al.,2023). The interviews provided qualitative data and enabled an understanding of the experiences of women in remote IT

work and the impact of their health needs on work engagement, productivity, and mental wellbeing.

These questions aimed to provide richer data on how remote work, motherhood, menstruation, menopause and workplace policies specifically impact women in the IT sector. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the following topics:

- Personal experiences with remote work during key life stages (motherhood, menstruation, menopause) in navigating professional and personal stressors.
- Coping mechanisms and strategies employed to manage stress and maintain work-life balance
- Perceived organisational support or lack thereof
- Attitudes toward existing policies related to maternity leave, menstrual health, and menopause
- Suggestions for improvement in organisational practices and policies

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who were working remotely in the IT sector. A thematic analysis approach was used to identify recurring themes and patterns in the data, with specific attention paid to the experiences shared by the participants on their organisation's policy to support women and its impact on their mental well-being, productivity and work-life balance.

3.1.2. Quantitative Approach

The quantitative phase of the research applied a survey to measure the mental well-being, stress levels, and workplace engagement of remotely working women in India's IT sector. The survey was designed to collect the appropriate data on various factors, including:

- Work-life balance
- Workload and performance pressures

- Support for mothers and women in key life stages (menstruation, menopause)
- Mental well-being indicators (e.g., stress, anxiety, burnout)
- Workplace engagement and productivity
- Perceptions of organisational support

The survey was shared online with women working in India's IT sector. The sample was drawn from multiple IT organisations to ensure the diversity and commonality of the findings.

The quantitative data were analysed using statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and analysis of variance, to examine the relationships between remote work stressors, mental well-being, and workplace engagement. This helped in a clear understanding of how specific stressors (e.g., caregiving responsibilities, parent care and menstrual health) influenced women's mental health and work performance.

3.2. Conceptual Framework and Study Variables

This study examined the interplay between organisational policies (independent variable), mental well-being, work-life balance, and employee engagement (dependent variables), and the moderating effects of life stages and work settings (control variables). The research was particularly positioned within the context of remote-working female employees in the Indian IT sector. The following section provides an in-depth discussion of each variable within the conceptual framework.

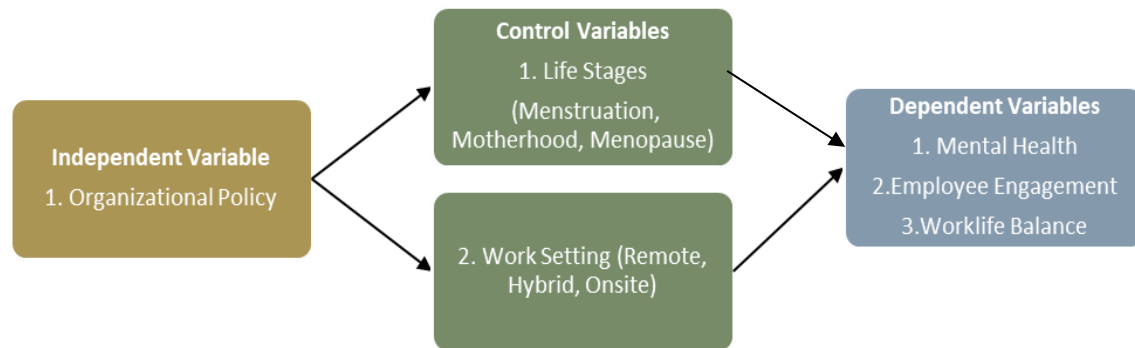


Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework and Variables (*Source: created by the author*)

3.2.1. Independent Variable: Organisational Policies

Organisational policies formalise institutional guidelines and interventions designed to enhance employee welfare, optimise work-life integration, and foster productivity. Within the context of this study, these policies function as a critical determinant influencing the mental well-being, work-life balance, and engagement levels of female employees in the IT sector.



Figure 3.2 Organisational Policies and Sub-Variables (*Source: created by the author*)

i. Sub-variables that define Organisational Policies

- a. Flexible Work Arrangements: This provides remote and hybrid work options to facilitate work-life balance and implementation of flexible working hours to accommodate personal responsibilities, including caregiving and health-related requirements.
- b. Mental Health Support Programs: The corporate wellness initiatives are essential for promoting employee well-being in the workplace. This includes providing access to mental health counselling and resources to support employees' mental health needs. Moreover, the development of employee assistance programs (EAPs) can meaningfully help in modifying levels of stress and anxiety in the workplace, offering valuable resources and support to

employees facing challenges. These initiatives enhance employee morale and contribute to a healthier and more productive work environment.

- c. **Leave Policies (Maternity, Menstrual, Menopause Leave):** Maternity leave policies should be included to extend leave entitlements, along with phased reintegration policies to effectively support female employees back to work postpartum. Additionally, menstrual leave can benefit women by providing committed provisions for periodic leave to address menstrual health challenges. Furthermore, instigating menopause friendly policies is equally important. This involves creating workplace accommodations for women experiencing menopause, including flexible scheduling and wellness support to promote their well-being during this transition.
- d. **Career Advancement Support:** Promoting gender gender-unbiased advancement policy is essential for addressing the barriers that women face in applying for leadership roles. This can be achieved through the enabling skill development initiatives, mentorship programs, and leadership training specifically customised for female professionals. We can help empower women to overcome obstacles and thrive in leadership positions by providing these supports.
- e. **Workload Management Strategies:** Developing a structured work allocation framework is essential for preventing the overburdening of women employees, ensuring that workloads are manageable and fair. Additionally, the implementation of digital management tools enhances overall efficiency by helping reduce the stress that often arises from workload imbalances. Together, these organisational involvements significantly influence employee experiences, which shape psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and professional obligation.

3.2.2. Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study serve as outcome measures reflecting the effectiveness of organisational policies in enhancing workplace well-being and performance.

i. Key Dependent Variables

- a. **Mental Health / Well-Being:** Psychological flexibility, emotional stability, and stress management are critical components within the occupational domain. However, the absence of suitable policy frameworks can worsen psychological distress, which can lead to symptoms such as anxiety, burnout, or depression. In contradiction, traditional mental health support mechanisms play a vital role in enhancing employee well-being and overall job satisfaction. Based on survey responses, those who rated their mental well-being as 1 or 2 are indicative of low mental health, while those who rated 4 or 5 demonstrate high mental health.

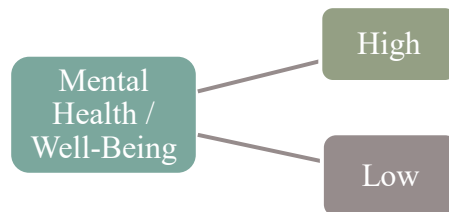


Figure 3.3 Variable: Mental Health / Well-being (*Source: created by the author*)

b. Work-life Balance: Work-life balance represents the equilibrium between professional responsibilities and personal obligations. However, a lack of organisational flexibility can lead to work-life conflict, which may heighten stress levels and reduce overall productivity. To mitigate these challenges, policies that facilitate adaptable work schedules and offer family-friendly benefits play a crucial role in enhancing work-life balance. In evaluating work-life balance, individuals who rated their experience as a 1 or 2 are considered to have a low work-life balance, while those who rated it as a 4 or 5 are regarded as having a high work-life balance.

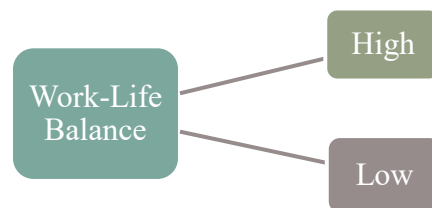


Figure 3.4 Variable: Work-Life Balance *(Source: created by the author)*

c. Employee Engagement: Reflects the degree of employee motivation, organisational commitment, and role involvement. High engagement is associated with increased job satisfaction, performance, and retention. Workplace interventions promoting career development and inclusive decision-making processes positively impact engagement levels (Agashe and Dhar, 2020). In this study, we have studied employee engagement by categorising the scores into two levels, where employees have rated job satisfaction, career

development and inclusivity as 4 or 5, indicating a high level of employee engagement and where females rate 1 or 2 its low.

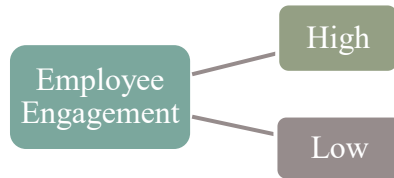


Figure 3.5 Variable: Employee Engagement *(Source: created by the author)*

ii. Interrelationship Between Variables

Observed evidence suggests that structured and inclusive organisational policies had a direct influence on mental well-being, work-life balance, and engagement, thereby fostering a more equitable and supportive work environment for female professionals in the IT sector.

3.2.3. Control Variables

Control variables are extraneous factors that, while not directly manipulated, exert a significant influence on the relationship between organisational policies and the dependent variables. These include life stages and work settings, both of which introduce variability in how workplace policies affect individual employees.

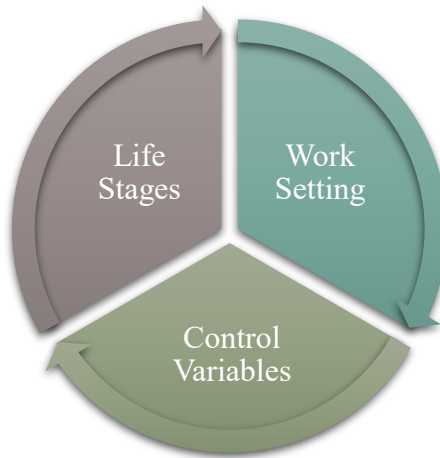


Figure 3.6 Control Variables *(Source: created by the author)*

i. Life Stages (Menstruation, Motherhood, Menopause)

Life stages constitute a critical moderating factor, as they introduce gender-specific physiological and social challenges that impact occupational performance and well-being.

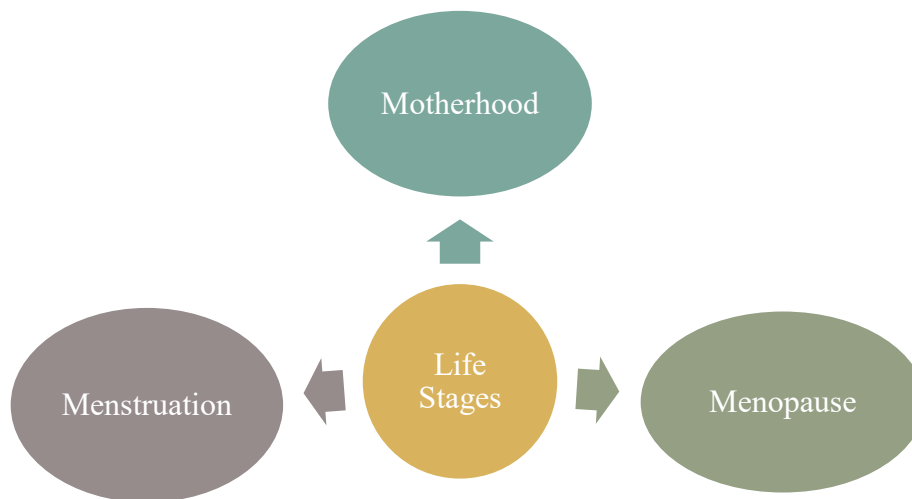


Figure 3.7 Life Stages of Women *(Source: created by the author)*

- a. Menstruation: Menstruation can lead to biological recurring symptoms, including fatigue, pain, and mood swings, that may significantly affect work productivity. These menstruation-related worries often demand policy interventions such as the implementation of menstrual leave and flexible scheduling to support those experiencing these symptoms (Sang et al., 2021).
- b. Motherhood: Working mothers with increased household and caregiving duties often conflict with professional commitments, leading to increased stress. Shapeless workplace policies may worsen this situation, which results in heightened stress levels, decreased engagement, and potential career inactivity. Though supportive involvements such as child care assistance, flexible work arrangements, and return-to-work plans have been shown to enhance the professional engagement of working mothers, allowing them to balance their personal and professional lives (Rocha et al., 2023).
- c. Menopause: A biological evolution complemented by physiological and psychological symptoms, including hormonal fluctuations, mental weakening, and mood swings. Insufficient organisational mindfulness of the challenges faced by women during menopause can lead to occupational disconnection and productivity loss. Therefore, the implementation of menopause-friendly workplace policies, including wellness programs and modified work hours, is vital in mitigating its impact on women in the workplace (Sang et al., 2021).

These life stages may negatively affect female employees' well-being, professional performance, and overall engagement without tailored workplace policies.

ii. Work Setting (Remote, Hybrid, Onsite)

The work setting serves as an additional moderating factor, influencing the extent to which organisational policies effectively address employee well-being and engagement.

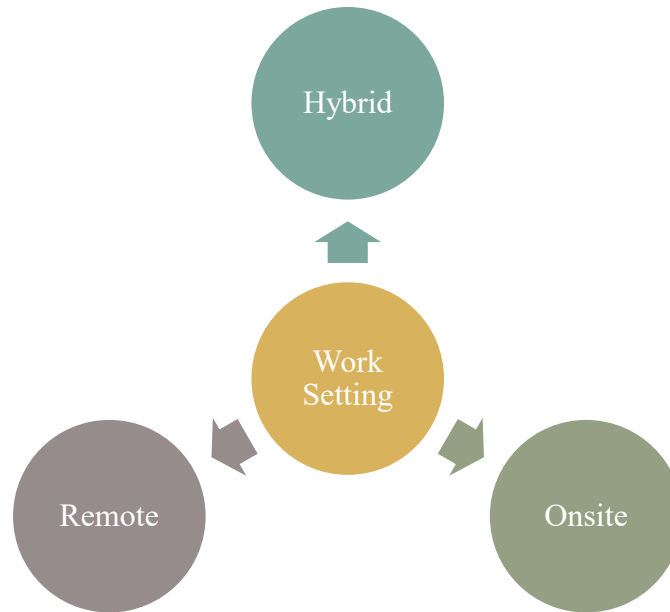


Figure 3.8 Work Settings in an IT Company *(Source: created by the author)*

- a. Remote Work: Working remotely comes with several advantages, including enhanced autonomy, increased flexibility, and reduced commuting stress. However, it also presents challenges such as increased social isolation, diminished professional visibility, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life. Balancing these benefits and challenges is essential for a successful remote work experience. Female employees who work 5 days a week from home were considered as working remotely.
- b. Hybrid Work: The hybrid work model offers several advantages, including a balanced integration of remote flexibility with in-office collaboration. However, it also presents challenges, such as potential scheduling inconsistencies and transitional stress that may

arise from fluctuating work environments. In this model, female employees who work 2-3 days a week in the office and the remaining days from home were considered to be operating in hybrid mode.

- c. **On-site Work:** Employees who work five days a week from the office often experience a variety of advantages and challenges. On the positive side, this arrangement enhances access to managerial support, provides a structured professional environment, and creates valuable networking opportunities. However, it also comes with certain drawbacks, such as reduced personal flexibility, longer commuting hours, and potential constraints on caregiving responsibilities. Overall, while onsite work can foster professional growth, it can also impose challenges that affect work-life balance.

3.3. Data Collection Methods and Instrument

3.3.1. Interview Protocol

The semi-structured interview guide was developed to discover the individual experiences of women working remotely in the IT sector for the three life stages of motherhood, menstruation and menopause. The interview consisted of open-ended questions, as added in Appendix C.

3.3.2. Survey Instrument

The survey was developed based on themes evolved from qualitative analysis, and some items were adapted from the validated scales and custom questions tailored to the research objectives, which are added in Appendix D.

The survey instrument was designed to measure study variables as per the research design. The questions /items kept in the instrument were adapted from a few standardised instruments as discussed below.

- i. Work-life balance: This variable was studied using two items in the survey instrument. These items were adapted from the Work-Life Balance Scale (WLB) (Carlson et al. 2000) to assess how women balance professional and personal responsibilities in a remote work setting. Items were mentioned to know Work-life imbalance" and "Difficulty separating work and personal life," as selectable stressors rather than direct Likert-scale items from Carlson's WLB scale.
- ii. Mental well-being: This variable was studied using three items in the survey instruments. These items were adapted using the Generalised Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD-7) (Spitzer et al. 2006) and Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, 1994). The following items were included in the survey instrument, which are also available in the Appendices.

"How would you rate your overall mental well-being while working remotely?"

"How often do you experience stress due to remote work and personal health needs?"

"How often do you feel isolated or disconnected from colleagues?"

- iii. Workplace engagement: This variable was studied using two items. These items were adapted using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2006) to gauge employees' involvement and enthusiasm in their work. The following items were included in the survey instrument, which are also available in the Appendices.

"Has remote work affected your professional engagement or participation in career development activities (e.g., promotions, skill development programs)?"

"Do you feel that remote work has led to better or worse career progression opportunities compared to in-office work?"

- iv. Menstruation, Motherhood, and Menopause Stressors: Custom questions based on themes generated through qualitative analysis were included to capture how these life stages affect work performance, mental health, and engagement.

3.3.3. Reliability and Validity of the Instruments

Ensuring the reliability and validity of the instruments used in this study was of paramount importance to maintain the rigour and credibility of the research findings.

i. Content Validity

To establish content validity, an initial interview schedule comprising 25 open-ended questions was developed based on the study objectives and a review of relevant literature. This preliminary schedule was then subjected to expert evaluation. Specifically, it was shared with a panel of five academicians with expertise in organisational studies and qualitative research, as well as five experienced IT professionals who possessed contextual knowledge of the industry under study.

The experts were asked to assess each item on criteria such as relevance, clarity, and appropriateness for the intended respondents. A quantitative threshold was adopted for item retention: only those questions that received at least 75% agreement (i.e., 7.5 out of 10 reviewers approving) on their relevance and clarity were retained in the final version of the interview schedule. This process ensured that the retained items were representative of the construct under investigation and were understandable by the respondents.

A similar iterative validation process was conducted for the survey instrument developed later in the study. The draft survey questionnaire was shared with the same panel of experts, who again evaluated the items based on their relevance to the research objectives, alignment with the

qualitative findings, and ease of interpretation by respondents. Only the items meeting the 75% consensus threshold were included in the final instrument. This systematic approach enhanced the content adequacy of both the interview and survey tools.

ii. Construct Validity

Construct validity was reinforced through a two-stage process. First, the qualitative thematic analysis of the interview data allowed for the identification of key themes and patterns that emerged organically from the participants' responses. These thematic codes were then used to refine and ensure alignment between the constructs and the questions included in the final survey instrument. By grounding the survey constructs in the empirical insights derived from qualitative data, the study ensured that the survey measured the intended underlying concepts.

This triangulated approach, drawing on literature, expert validation, and insights from qualitative analysis, ensured that the tools used were both contextually relevant and theoretically robust, thereby enhancing their construct validity.

iii. Reliability

The reliability of the survey instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which evaluates the internal consistency of multi-item scales. Values above the generally accepted threshold of 0.70 were considered indicative of acceptable reliability, ensuring that the items within each construct measured the same underlying concept consistently. Additionally, a pilot test was conducted with a small sample to identify any ambiguities and to refine the instruments further. This iterative approach enhanced the stability and reliability of the measures.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Mental Well-being	0.84
Work-Life Balance	0.78
Employee Engagement	0.81
Menstruation-related Stress	0.76
Motherhood-related Stress	0.82
Menopause-related Stress	0.74

Table 3.1 Cronbach's Alpha Reliability and Validity on Data

Cronbach's Alpha was computed for each multi-item construct to measure the internal consistency of the survey instrument. These reliability coefficients indicated strong internal consistency for mental well-being ($\alpha = 0.84$), employee engagement ($\alpha = 0.81$), and motherhood-related stress ($\alpha = 0.82$), signifying these constructs were measured reliably. The constructs work-life balance ($\alpha = 0.78$) and menstruation-related stress ($\alpha = 0.76$) demonstrated acceptable reliability, whereas menopause-related stress ($\alpha = 0.74$) was also within an acceptable range for exploratory research. These results collectively authenticate the coherence of the instrument and support its suitability for analysing the mental and workplace experiences of remotely working women in the Indian IT sector.

3.4. Population and Sample Description

The target population for this research consists of women who are currently working remotely in the IT sector in India. The sample was selected using purposive sampling techniques.

3.4.1. Interview Sample

A total of 50 females aged between 25-55 years working in the IT sector were approached for the first phase of research. Out of 50, 30 women agreed to be interviewed, and only 17 women were found relevant for analysis and suitable for the research. These women had self-identified as experiencing one or more stressors associated with motherhood, menstruation, or menopause. The purposive sampling approach ensured that participants had relevant experiences that were associated with the research objectives, allowing for a deeper exploration of the issues.

3.4.2. Survey Sample

A total of 500 females aged between 25-55 years working in the IT sector were approached for the second phase of research. Out of 500, 200 females agreed to participate and filled out the questionnaire. Out of 200, 158 responses were found suitable and relevant for this survey. The survey was shared through online platforms, professional networks, and social media groups focused on women in IT.

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques and Tools

3.5.1. Qualitative Data Analysis

In qualitative research, the thematic coding method is used to identify and organise the patterns within word-based data. Short labels (codes) to key phrases or responses are assigned, which are then grouped into broader subthemes and main themes. These themes support in revealing the underlying meanings, experiences, or issues shared across participants. The interview transcripts were examined using Microsoft Excel to perform a thematic analysis. The data was coded into main themes such as “remote work stressors”, “impact of motherhood on work”, “menstruation & workplace challenges”, “menopause and its Impact on Work”, “mental well-being & stress management”, “organisational policies and support”, “workplace engagement and career

development”, and subthemes were identified such as “work-life imbalance”, “isolation from colleagues”, “work anxiety and emotional burnout”, “coping strategies for workplace stress”. Thematic analysis was allowed for the identification of patterns, differences, and similarities across participants' experiences.

3.5.2. Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey responses were analysed using Microsoft Excel and Google Colab, concentrating on several key areas. Various experiments were conducted, which included descriptive statistics to understand the sample and null hypothesis as per the themes identified in the qualitative analysis to identify the relationships between remote work stressors, mental well-being, and workplace engagement.

3.5.3. Statistical Analysis Tools

To conduct correlation analysis and generate visualisations, the study utilised several statistical and data visualisation libraries in Python using Google Colab. Below is an overview of the key tools and their applications in the analysis.

i. Correlation Analysis

Correlational analysis was used to examine the strength and direction of relationships between independent variables (organisational policies), dependent variables (stressors, mental well-being, work engagement, work-life balance), and control variables (life stages, work setting, etc.).

ii. Statistical Tools Used:

- a. **Pearson's Correlation Coefficient:** The correlation coefficient measures the linear relationship between two numeric variables, with values ranging from -1 to 1. A value of +1 indicates a strong positive correlation, meaning that as one variable increases, the

other also increases. Conversely, a value of -1 signifies a strong negative correlation, where an increase in one variable results in a decrease in the other. A correlation coefficient of 0 suggests that there is no correlation between the two variables.

b. Data Visualisations: Various types of visualisations were used to represent the data as follows

- Scatter Plots: Used to explore relationships between two specific variables. A positive trend indicates a direct relationship, while a negative trend indicates an inverse relationship.
- Bar Chart: Bar charts are useful for showing distributions, frequencies, or averages across groups, offering a straightforward way to understand which categories are higher or lower relative to each other.
- Line chart: A type of graph that displays information as a series of data points connected by straight lines. It is typically used to show trends or changes over time or to compare the interaction between variables. In the case of interaction plots, line charts help visualise how two different factors influence an outcome and whether their effects are consistent or vary across conditions.
- Box Plot: A graphical representation that shows the distribution of a dataset through its minimum, maximum, median, and quartiles. It displays a box for the middle 50% of the data, with a line inside indicating the median, and lines called whiskers extending to the lowest and highest values within a normal range. It helps quickly understand data spread, central tendency, and variability, and is useful for comparing multiple groups side by side.

c. ANOVA (Analysis of Variance): It is a statistical technique used to determine whether there are significant differences between the means of three or more groups. It examines the impact of one or more independent variables (factors) on a single dependent variable.

- One-Way ANOVA: It is used when you want to examine the effect of a single independent variable on one dependent variable.
- Two-Way ANOVA: It is used when there are two independent variables, and you want to understand their individual and combined effects on a single dependent variable.

d. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test: The research data should be of high quality and trustworthy, for which it is essential to do a reliability and validity test. Reliability refers to the consistency of a measurement; if the tool provides similar results in consistent conditions, it is considered reliable. Validity ensures that the tool measures what it is intended to measure accurately. They form the foundation of thorough research. The results may be irrelevant or incorrect and vary randomly without reliability and validity, even if it's consistent. Confirming both means that the findings are dependable, meaningful, and can be confidently used for decision-making and further research.

Cronbach's Alpha (α) is calculated using a specific statistical formula that measures the internal consistency of the data. It evaluates whether the items intended to measure the same general construct yield similar scores.

Formula for Cronbach's Alpha

$$\alpha = (k / (k - 1)) * (1 - (\sum \sigma_i^2 / \sigma^2_T))$$

Where:

- α : represents Cronbach's alpha.

- k is the number of items in the scale.
- $\sum \sigma_i^2$: is the sum of the variances of each item.
- σ^2_T is the variance of the total scores (sum of all items).

3.6. Ethical Considerations

This study followed the ethical guidelines to ensure participant's confidentiality, informed consent, and data security. The following ethical considerations were tracked:

- **Informed Consent:** All participants were informed about the nature of the study, its objectives, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. They were provided with written consent before participating in the survey or interview, as added in Appendices A and B.
- **Confidentiality:** Participants' identities and responses remained confidential. Data was anonymised, and any identifying information was kept separate from the research data.
- **Data Security:** All data was stored securely and was only accessible to the research team. Digital data was encrypted and locked.

3.7. Research Design Limitations

This research aims to provide valuable insights into the stressors that remotely working women face in India's IT sector. There are a few limitations as follows:

- **Self-Reported Data:** The study depends on self-reported data, which may introduce biases such as social desirability bias or recall bias.
- **Sample Size:** Although the sample size for both the survey and interviews was adequate, a larger sample would improve the generalizability of the findings.

- Cultural Context: The study focuses on women in India's IT sector, so the findings may not be directly applicable to women in other sectors or countries.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the survey conducted to examine the factors affecting the mental well-being of female employees working remotely in the Indian IT sector. This analysis aims to identify key stressors, their impact on mental health, and the role of organisational policies in addressing these challenges. The findings are structured to provide a clear understanding of respondents' demographic characteristics, work settings, stressors related to key life stages (motherhood, menstruation, menopause), and overall mental well-being. The chapter is divided into three parts, which start with Phase 1 on one-to-one interviews, and Phase 2 with the survey, followed by the descriptive analysis and experiments. The research was conducted in two phases as follows:

In Phase I-Qualitative Study, comprehensive one-on-one interviews were scheduled with working women in various age categories to study:

- Lived experiences of remote working women in navigating professional and personal stressors.
- The nuanced emotional and psychological impact of caregiving responsibilities and biological transitions on mental well-being.
- Perceptions of organisational support, HR policies, and workplace culture in remote/hybrid setups.
- Coping mechanisms adopted by women to manage stress, isolation, and work-life balance.
- Suggestions from participants for creating more inclusive and empathetic remote work environments.

In Phase II-Quantitative Study, a survey was conducted to study:

- The factors affecting the mental well-being of female employees working remotely in the Indian IT sector.
- The demographic characteristics and work settings of respondents to understand contextual influences.
- Stressors associated with key life stages—motherhood, menstruation, and menopause—and their impact on mental health.
- The role of organisational policies and support mechanisms in addressing these stressors.
- The effectiveness of coping strategies adopted by female employees in managing workplace challenges.

This chapter presents the results of both Phase I and Phase II investigations. The findings in this chapter will serve as the foundation for developing recommendations for organisations to create more inclusive and supportive work environments for female employees in remote and hybrid settings.

4.1. Phase I Qualitative Study

The Phase I investigation aimed at having in-depth one-to-one interviews with women working in the IT sector of different age groups and life stages to identify various factors that contribute to stressors and mental well-being. 17 female employees were interviewed to know the challenges faced by female employees working remotely in the Indian IT sector. This section presents the overarching findings generated by developing a thematic map comprising eight primary themes and their corresponding subthemes derived from qualitative data analysis. The themes identified

in the study represent the primary conceptual findings and are directly aligned with the research objectives as follows:

- To identify the stressors faced by women in India's IT sector working remotely.
- To evaluate the impact of key life stages of motherhood, menstruation, and menopause on women's mental well-being in the workplace.
- To evaluate the role of remote work in worsening these stressors for women in the IT sector.
- To explore the existing policies and practices within India's IT sector related to gender inclusivity, mental well-being, and support for women in key life stages.
- To propose inclusive growth and equity policies that can address women's mental well-being and workplace engagement in remote work settings.

4.1.1. Thematic Map and Overarching Finding

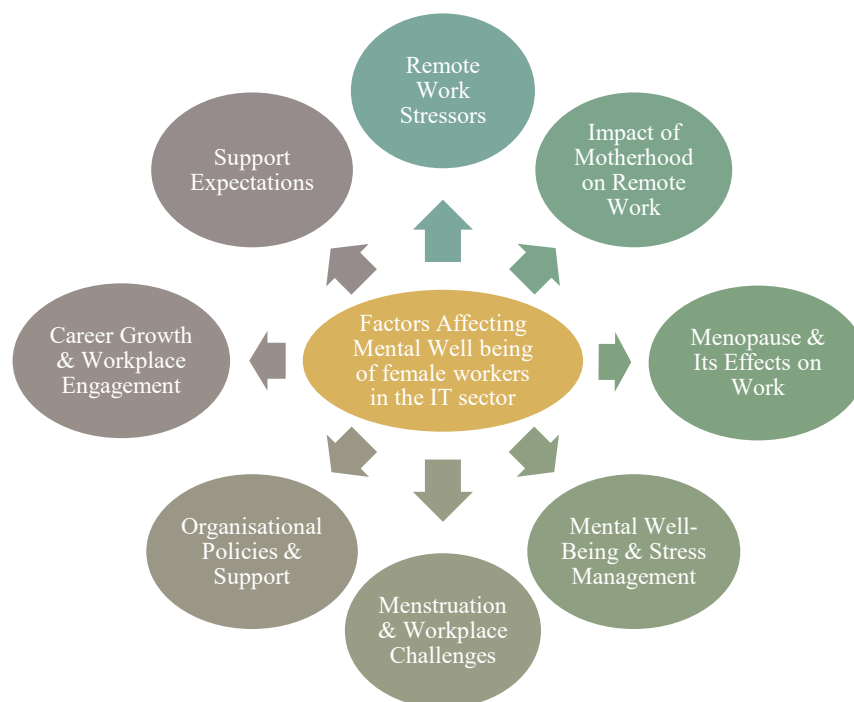


Figure 4.1 Thematic Map (Source: Created by Author)

This thematic structure highlights the complex interplay between individual expectations of women towards their organisational policies, the intricacies of stressors due to life stages (menstruation, motherhood, menopause), career aspirations, personal health challenges and challenges involved in different work settings (remote, hybrid, onsite) of women working in the Indian IT sector.

The results derived from an iterative thematic analysis represent the views, experiences and perspectives of working women concerning their mental well-being and how it is impacted by work settings, life stages and company policies. Data were systematically gathered via semi-structured interviews and analysed following the ‘Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) guidelines (Tong, Sainsbury and Craig, 2007). The guidelines assured methodical transparency and provided confidence in the credibility of the analytical procedures employed. Selected anonymous quotes from participants were incorporated throughout the narratives to substantiate key findings. Participant identities, employment details, including organisation name, were obscured due to ethical considerations and confidentiality agreement. Protocols were established to reduce the likelihood of unintentional exposure of personal or business-related information.

The key findings were structured methodically, introducing the main theme and subsequently addressing the subtheme and codes. Every concept is supported by relevant examples and direct quotations presented clearly and logically. This method ensures accuracy and depth in articulating the perspective of the participants. The themes, subthemes and codes are as follows:

i. Remote Work Stressors

During the interview, 41 % of the participants expressed having a work-life imbalance, 53 % of them felt isolated from their colleagues, 59 % of them reported health-related stress, 24 % of them were overworking, and 35% of them had a lack of support for family responsibilities. The five subthemes that constituted this main theme were 'work-life imbalance', 'isolation from colleagues', 'health-related stress', 'overwork/long work hours', and 'lack of support for family responsibilities'. These codes were picked to identify subthemes in the conversations with the interviewees as follows.

a. Work-Life Imbalance

Remote workers struggle to separate their job from personal responsibilities, leading to long working hours and mental exhaustion.

Few participants shared,

- *"I log in early and sign off late. It feels like I'm always on call."*
- *"I often find myself replying to emails past midnight. There is no real boundary between work and home anymore."*
- *"Even when I take a break, my laptop is right there on the dining table, calling me back to work."*
- *"It is so difficult to handle multiple things at the same time. There should be some understanding towards us."*

b. Isolation from colleagues

The absence of daily interactions with colleagues makes remote work isolating. Social disconnection makes employees feel lonely and unmotivated.

Few participants mentioned,

- *"I miss the casual interactions at work. Without those informal chats, remote work feels isolating."*
- *"I miss those spontaneous lunch breaks with colleagues. Now, it's just video calls that feel scripted."*
- *"I used to get motivation from my coworkers, but now I feel like I'm working in a silo."*
- *"Attending virtual meetings doesn't give you the feeling of being in a team."*
- *"Sometimes, I feel like going to the office and talking with my team, participating in office events, having fun and going out with the team to relax and connect."*

c. Health-Related Stress (Fatigue & Mental Exhaustion)

Working for extended periods on a screen leads to fatigue and decreased concentration. Sitting all day and juggling multiple tasks remotely has affected physical and mental well-being

Few participants said,

- *"My eyes hurt from staring at my laptop all day, and I barely get breaks between meetings."*
- *"I feel exhausted all the time. Even when I get enough sleep, the constant screen exposure drains me."*
- *"Back pain and headaches are my new work buddies. Remote work has made me feel more physically worn out."*

d. Overwork and Long Working Hours

Remote work sometimes requires employees to remain available beyond office hours.

Few participants said,

- *"There's an unspoken expectation that we must always be available—it's mentally draining."*
- *"There is no limitation for work timing."*
- *"My team thinks I am available any time as I am at home and working remotely."*

e. Lack of Support for Family Responsibilities

Many remote workers also manage household and caregiving responsibilities, which increases stress due to a lack of support.

Few Participants said,

- *"With my toddler at home, meetings often get interrupted. It's hard to maintain a strict schedule."*
- *"I keep on running between my work and fulfilling my daughter's needs, as there is no support"*
- *"There is no support from anywhere to take care of my kid and do household chores."*

ii. The Impact of Motherhood on Remote Work

During the interview, 41% of the participants' performance got affected due to motherhood, while 65% of them experienced stress due to caregiving responsibilities, 18% of participants mentioned there is a lack of organisational support, and 53% of them mentioned the need for tailored flexible work policies. The four subthemes that constituted this main theme were 'performance affected due to motherhood', 'stress due to caregiving responsibilities', 'lack of organisational support' and

'flexible work policies'. These codes were picked to identify subthemes in the conversations with the interviewees as follows.

a. Performance Affected due to Motherhood

Working mothers often experience lower productivity due to childcare duties or working additional hours to fulfil expectations at the office.

Few participants said

- *"It's impossible to focus entirely on work while looking after a baby at home."*
- *"My son keeps on asking for food, play time, toys, etc., between my meetings, and it's irritating managing both at the same time."*
- *"I get distracted when my daughter cries due to her demands, and I have to complete my work within the time limit."*
- *"I have to work twice as hard to prove my worth."*

b. Stress Due to Caregiving Responsibilities

Many mothers feel overwhelmed, trying to fulfil their work deadlines and parenting responsibilities at the same time.

Few Participants said,

- *"I feel extremely stressed due to juggling between taking care of my kid and completing my work."*
- *"I feel sad as I am not giving my 100 % to my kid, due to career orientation."*
- *"It is disappointing when my son calls me to play with him, and I have to ignore him due to my work."*
- *"It is really difficult to manage kids and work together. I feel stressed out."*

c. Lack of Organisational Support for Mothers

A few companies do not provide any formal support for working mothers. This can be studied more to know how it impacts the females working in remote work settings.

Few participants said,

- *"My male boss doesn't understand why I need my company to support me as a mother."*
- *"In spite of having flexibility at work, my boss doesn't really follow the same and understand."*
- *"I have resumed my office after 12 weeks of maternity leave, but my baby is too small to ignore his needs. My company should support me in extending my leave."*

d. Flexible Work Policies

Many female employees have reported that their company has given them flexible work arrangements to handle work and home, but they are not fully satisfied with the adjustments. Mothers advocate for adjustable work schedules and childcare assistance.

Few participants said,

- *"If HR acknowledged burnout and caregiving struggles, it would make a big difference in managing work."*
- *"Flexible work policy has supported me to manage my home and work efficiently."*
- *"My company has understood my need for flexible working due to my toddler at home."*
- *"Flexible work hours should be allowed to mothers during their initial stage of motherhood."*
- *"The company should give flexibility like WFH and flexible work timings to accommodate the needs of mothers or women experiencing issues like menstruation or menopause. If working from the office, then there should be rest areas for women to use when needed."*

- “Inclusivity and Flexibility as per various conditions”
- “Need more flexibility”
- “Increase flexibility in working hours”

iii. Menstruation and Workplace Challenges

During the interview, 59% of the participants who experienced menstrual symptoms were affecting their work performance, while 59% of them were not comfortable discussing menstruation, and 29% of them mentioned that there was a lack of menstruation-related workplace policies. Three codes that constituted this theme were ‘menstruation affecting work performance’, ‘comfort level in discussing menstruation’, and ‘lack of menstruation-related workplace policies’. These codes were picked to identify subcodes in the conversations with the interviewees as follows.

a. Menstruation Affecting Work Performance

Many females faced symptoms such as pain, fatigue, and mood swings that affect work productivity.

A few of the participants said,

- *“I try to plan lighter workdays during my cycle, but it’s not always possible.”*
- *“It’s difficult to sit when I have menstrual cramps, and I take a break.”*
- *“I feel exhausted and tired because of the heavy flow most of the time and prefer taking leave, ignoring my work”*
- *“I have to go through fatigue, Cramps or abdominal pain, Mood swings, Headaches, Back pain during my periods, which affects my work.”*

b. Comfort Level in Discussing Menstruation at Work

59 per cent of female employees felt uncomfortable talking about menstrual health issues with their managers. It is still considered taboo in society, and people seem to be confused about what is right and what they should expect.

Few participants said,

- *"Menstruation is not openly discussed; it's treated as a personal matter."*
- *"Menstruation should be normalised as it is a common problem faced by females."*
- *"I cannot discuss the symptoms and reasons behind not being active at work with my male manager"*
- *"There should be open discussions on menstrual health in the workplace."*
- *"I am comfortable talking to my manager about my menstrual health issues, and he understands well."*
- *"I am okay to discuss with my manager about my menstrual symptoms as she too understands it."*

c. Lack of Policies Supporting Menstrual Health

Most workplaces do not have menstrual leave or accommodations in the offices.

Few participants said,

- *"HR wellness programs include stress management, but menstrual health is ignored."*
- *"Being at home doesn't solve the problem. I wish my company had given me menstrual leave for at least a day to relax."*
- *"Having a policy for 3 days earned leave for 3M factors each month."*
- *"We don't have policies specific to periods or menopause."*

iv. Menopause and Its Effects on Work

During the interview, 24% of the participants experienced menopausal symptoms that affected their productivity, while 41% of them were facing menopausal stress, and their mental wellbeing was affected, and 24% of them mentioned that there were no workplace policies for menopause. Three codes that constituted this theme were 'symptoms affecting productivity', 'menopausal stress and mental well-being', and 'no workplace policies for menopause'. These codes were picked to identify subcodes in the conversations with the interviewees as follows.

a. Symptoms Affecting Productivity

Many female employees in their menopause or perimenopause experienced anxiety, stress, difficulty concentrating, hot flashes, sleep disturbances, and mood swings, which reduced work efficiency.

Few participants said,

- *"There are days when menopause symptoms make my job feel overwhelming."*
- *"I suddenly feel anxious due to hot flashes and couldn't sleep at times, due to which it feels difficult concentrating."*
- *"Sometimes I don't feel like working, couldn't sleep properly and feel stressed."*

b. Menopausal Stress and Mental Well-Being

Many menopausal employees occasionally experience higher stress levels due to hormonal changes, but it doesn't affect their mental well-being as they use different coping techniques to manage stress.

A few of the participants said,

- *"Menopausal symptoms are unpredictable; I can get mood swings, hot flashes, anxiety, and feel stressed at times."*
- *"I cannot sleep early even if I am tired. I feel disturbed and have difficulty concentrating at work."*
- *"I feel stressed when I am unable to concentrate, which makes me feel anxious with sudden sweating."*
- *"For my mental well-being, I engage myself in coping mechanisms and feel good."*

c. No Workplace Policies for Menopause

Few organisations acknowledge menopause-related challenges, but do not have a menopausal leave policy. Mental health services or health care counselling should be provided to help them tackle day-to-day challenges faced due to menopausal symptoms.

Few participants said,

- *"There are maternity policies, but nothing for women experiencing menopause."*
- *"I wish my company had provided some healthcare counselling to understand and get help when I feel down with all the symptoms I face during my menopause."*
- *"Need more informative sessions to overcome such situations in the workplace."*
- *"The company should give flexible work timings to accommodate the needs of mothers or women experiencing issues like menstruation or menopause. If working from the office, then there should be rest areas for women to use when needed."*

v. Mental Well-Being and Stress Management

During the interview, 59% of the participants experienced work anxiety and emotional burnout, while 100% of them were using coping strategies to cope with workplace stress. Two codes that

constituted this theme were 'work anxiety and emotional burnout' and 'coping strategies for workplace stress'. These codes were picked to identify subcodes in the conversations with the interviewees as follows.

a. Work Anxiety and Emotional Burnout

Remote workers occasionally experience high stress levels due to work and personal needs, which creates anxiety and emotional burnout. Most of the females faced poor mental well-being.

Few participants said,

- *"The pressure to always be available drains my mental health."*
- *"Sometimes, I feel anxious and stressed because of working continuously without breaks."*
- *"It feels low when you work alone at home."*
- *"Sometimes I feel I am not enough for anyone, neither at home nor in the office."*
- *"The work is everywhere, and it's endless for me. How much should I work?"*

b. Coping Strategies for Workplace Stress

Remote workers usually took breaks, engaged themselves in exercising daily, preferred talking to their managers, used time management techniques, and practised meditation to manage stress.

Few participants said,

- *"Short walks, meditation and yoga help me regain focus."*
- *"I use time management techniques to manage work and take breaks to manage overworking."*
- *"I prefer talking to my manager to let him know my work-related stress and engage in exercising daily to feel good."*
- *"I exercise regularly to feel fresh and feel good."*

vi. Organisational Policies and Support

During the interview, it was found that 66 % of the participants mentioned their current policies were not effective, and they were expecting a customised policy as per the life stages and situations they are in. One code that constituted this theme was the effectiveness of current policies and expectations. The following codes were picked to identify subthemes in the conversations with interviewees.

a. Effectiveness of Current Policies and Expectations

Many employees feel that current HR policies do not fully address women's challenges, and they are not satisfied with them. Organisations lack policies for menstrual leave and menopause-related accommodations.

Few participants said,

- *“Existing policies are ok but would have been more satisfying if my company had focused on more flexibility at work, health-related leaves, and family support.”*
- *“I want a menstrual leave or time off during my periods to relax. I wish my company would provide paid leave for me.”*
- *“Many times, I want to talk to someone who will not judge me, I wish my company would have provided me with mental health services to discuss my problems.”*
- *“Flexible working hours and awareness of various team members' needs. One size doesn't fit all, so policies need to cater to a larger audience rather than a small section only.”*
- *“Need more informative sessions to overcome such situations in the workplace”*
- *“There should be a menstrual leave policy, flexible working hours should be allowed to mothers during their initial stage of motherhood.”*

- *“We should have open discussions with the female professionals in the office and females of all age groups to come and have a discussion on such health and hygiene issues specifically for women.”*
- *“Having a policy for 3 days earned leave for 3M factors each month.”*

vii. Career Growth and Workplace Engagement

During the interview, 47% of the participants mentioned that there were limited career opportunities due to remote work, while 24% mentioned there was limited access to mentorship and training. Two codes that constituted this theme were 'limited career progression due to remote work' and 'limited access to mentorship and training'. These codes were picked to identify subthemes in the conversations with the interviewees as follows.

a. Limited career progression due to remote work

Remote workers feel less visible for promotions and networking opportunities. There are limited progression opportunities due to not working from the office. Some employees believe remote workers are unfairly assessed in career growth. The performance evaluation should be unbiased, irrespective of location.

Few participants said,

- *“I feel ignored when it comes to relevant responsibilities and handling leadership roles.”*
- *“My VP expects me to be available in the office and then expects a promotion.”*
- *“There were few trainings which were conducted only for people who are present in the office, I felt ignored.”*
- *“Promotions seem to go to those more visible on virtual calls, leaving many of us at a disadvantage.”*

- *“Being a female working remotely, I often feel my performance is getting ignored, whatever I do. I have discussed regarding my promotion with my manager multiple times.”*
- *“My manager told me I cannot be considered for promotion as I am working remotely despite being the top performer.”*
- *“There is a confirmation bias that people working from home are getting enough privilege in terms of flexibility, and they should get paid less. Where there is no difference in the work, we do be remotely; still, there is a huge difference in the compensation.”*

b. Limited Access to Mentorship and Training

Remote work restricts learning opportunities and professional development. Employees feel ignored and less valued due to less access to physical training in the office.

Few participants said,

- *“There were few leadership development programs where I was eligible but not allowed to get the enrolled as I was not in office.”*
- *“My manager supports his team members more than those who are in the office to talk with him.”*
- *“I miss being in the office to get more mentoring from my seniors.”*

viii. Support Expectations

During the interview, 65 % of the participants expected mental and physical health support programs, while 53 % of them believed that there is a need to encourage workplace conversation to overcome stress at the workplace. Two codes that constituted this theme are ‘mental and physical health support programs’ and ‘encouraging workplace conversation’. These codes were picked to identify subcodes in the conversations with the interviewees and are as follows.

a. Mental and Physical Health Support Programs

Companies need structured HR initiatives for stress management, mental well-being and physical health support to make them feel important and valued.

Few participants said,

- *“HR should understand others' feelings.”*
- *“Having an understanding manager to help out in difficult situations is a need.”*
- *“Give time for short naps, doctors available, Managers can be more empathetic.”*
- *“Access to mental health counselling should be standard in every organisation.”*
- *“It would be great if my company ensures family support programs and health-related paid leaves for various challenges.”*

b. Encouraging Workplace Conversations

There should be open discussions on gender-specific health challenges at work.

Few participants said,

- *“We should have an open discussion with the female professionals in the office and females of all age groups to come and have a discussion on such health and hygiene issues specifically for women.”*
- *“One size doesn't fit all, so policies need to cater to a larger audience rather than a small section only.”*
- *“Frequent physical meetings rather than virtual connections.”*
- *“Understanding Manager to help out in difficult situations is a need.”*
- *“Start conversations about women's health—don't ignore it.”*

- *“I am looking forward to multiple check-ins by the supervisor to feel connected and supported.”*

4.1.2. Key Interpretation of Phase I Qualitative Analysis:

In the Phase I qualitative study, a total of eight themes emerged that defined the various factors impacting the mental well-being of women working in the IT sector. These themes included remote work stressors, impact of motherhood on work, menstruation and workplace challenges, menopause and work, mental wellbeing and stress management, organisation policy and support, career growth and engagement, and support expectations. Each of these themes was derived from the following codes and subcodes.

i. Remote Work Stressors

- **Work-Life Imbalance:** Difficulty in drawing boundaries between work and personal life, resulting in long hours and exhaustion.
- **Isolation from Colleagues:** Lack of casual workplace interactions leads to loneliness and decreased motivation.
- **Health-Related Stress:** Physical strain, such as back pain, eye strain, and fatigue due to extended screen time and sedentary work.
- **Overwork:** Unspoken expectation to be "always available" due to being at home.
- **Lack of Support for Family Duties:** Women juggle caregiving and professional tasks without external or organisational support.

ii. Impact of Motherhood on Work

- **Reduced Performance:** Constant interruptions and caregiving demands lower focus and productivity.
- **Stress from Caregiving:** Emotional burden of not giving enough to either work or family.

- Lack of Organisational Support: Maternity policies are often inadequate, and empathy from leadership is lacking.
- Flexibility Needed: Flexible hours help but are inconsistently implemented or insufficient.

iii. Menstruation and Workplace Challenges

- Performance Disruption: Menstrual symptoms (cramps, fatigue, etc.) hinder work performance.
- Taboo Conversations: Half of the respondents feel uncomfortable discussing menstrual health at work.
- Policy Gaps: Lack of menstrual leave and dedicated wellness policies around menstruation.

iv. Menopause and Work

- Productivity Challenges: Symptoms like hot flashes, sleep issues, and anxiety reduce focus and performance.
- Stress Management: While some stress is present, many use coping strategies like mindfulness.
- Policy Absence: There is no structured support or conversations around menopause in most workplaces.

v. Mental Well-Being and Stress Management

- Burnout & Anxiety: Emotional exhaustion due to constant availability and lack of workplace structure.
- Coping Strategies: Many women use physical activity, meditation, and manager discussions to cope with stress.

vi. Organisational Policy and Support

- **Policy Dissatisfaction:** Existing HR policies are insufficient in addressing gender-specific and remote work challenges.
- **Need for Inclusivity:** Respondents highlighted the need for policies tailored to varied needs (menstruation, motherhood, menopause).
- **Desire for Mental Health Support:** Requests for mental health services and empathetic leadership are recurrent.

vii. Career Growth & Engagement

- **Stalled Career Progression:** Women working remotely feel overlooked for promotions and leadership roles.
- **Bias in Evaluation:** Remote employees believe they are unfairly evaluated compared to on-site peers.
- **Lack of Mentorship:** Limited access to mentoring and upskilling opportunities due to physical absence from the office.

viii. Support Expectations

- **Health Support Programs:** Participants want mental health counselling, short breaks, nap time, and empathetic management.
- **Open Conversations:** Need for forums to discuss women's health issues freely at work.
- **Customised Policies:** A strong call for individualised, flexible, and inclusive HR practices.

4.2. Phase II Quantitative Study

Phase 2 of the survey was conducted to examine the factors affecting the mental well-being of female employees working remotely in the Indian IT sector. The analysis aims to uncover key stressors and life stages, their impact on mental health, and the role of organisational policies in mitigating these challenges. The findings are structured to provide a clear understanding of respondents' demographic characteristics, work settings, stressors related to key life stages (motherhood, menstruation, menopause), and overall mental well-being.

The findings in this section, along with the Phase I derivatives, will serve as the foundation for developing recommendations for organisations to create more inclusive and supportive work environments for female employees in remote and hybrid settings.

4.2.1. Experiment 1

i. Identification of Stressors

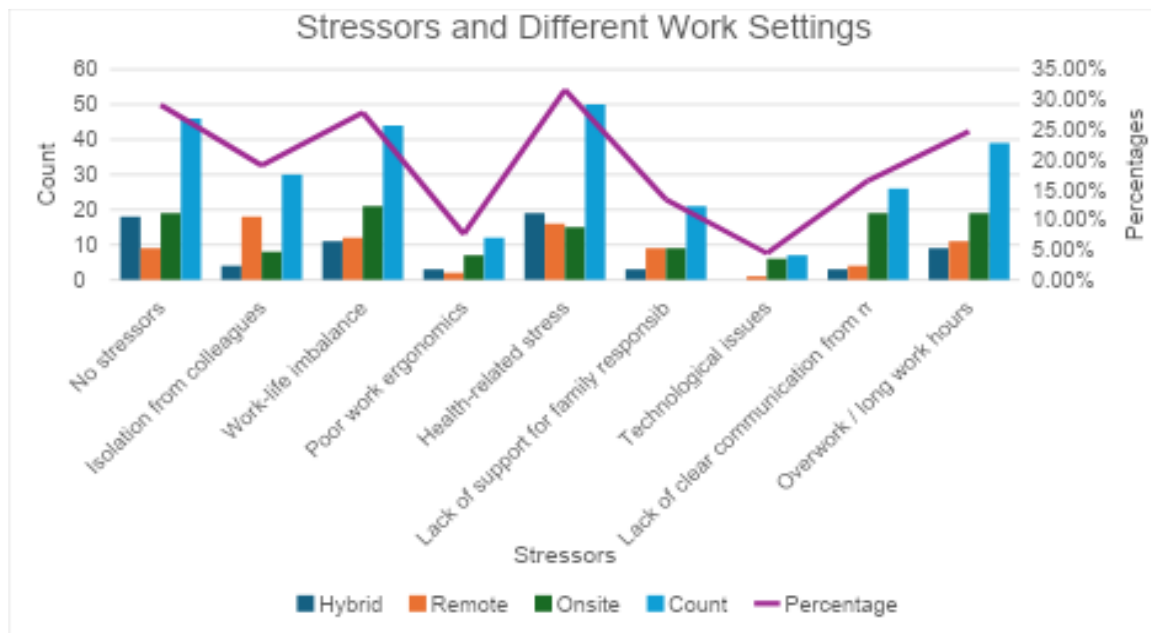
The objective of this experiment was to identify the common stressors faced by respondents and their impact on mental well-being. The data highlighted the following distribution of various stressors among women working in different work settings.

ii. Key Stressors

Table 4.1 Stressors Distribution Across Work Settings

Stressor	Hybrid	Remote	Onsite	Count	Percentage
No stressors	18	9	19	46	29.10%
Isolation from colleagues	4	18	8	30	19.00%
Work-life imbalance	11	12	21	44	27.80%
Poor work ergonomics	3	2	7	12	7.60%
Health-related stress	19	16	15	50	31.60%

Stressor	Hybrid	Remote	Onsite	Count	Percentage
Lack of support for family responsibilities	3	9	9	21	13.30%
Technological issues	0	1	6	7	4.40%
Lack of clear communication from managers	3	4	19	26	16.50%
Overwork / long work hours	9	11	19	39	24.70%



Figure

4.2 Stressors and Different Work Settings (Source: created by the author)

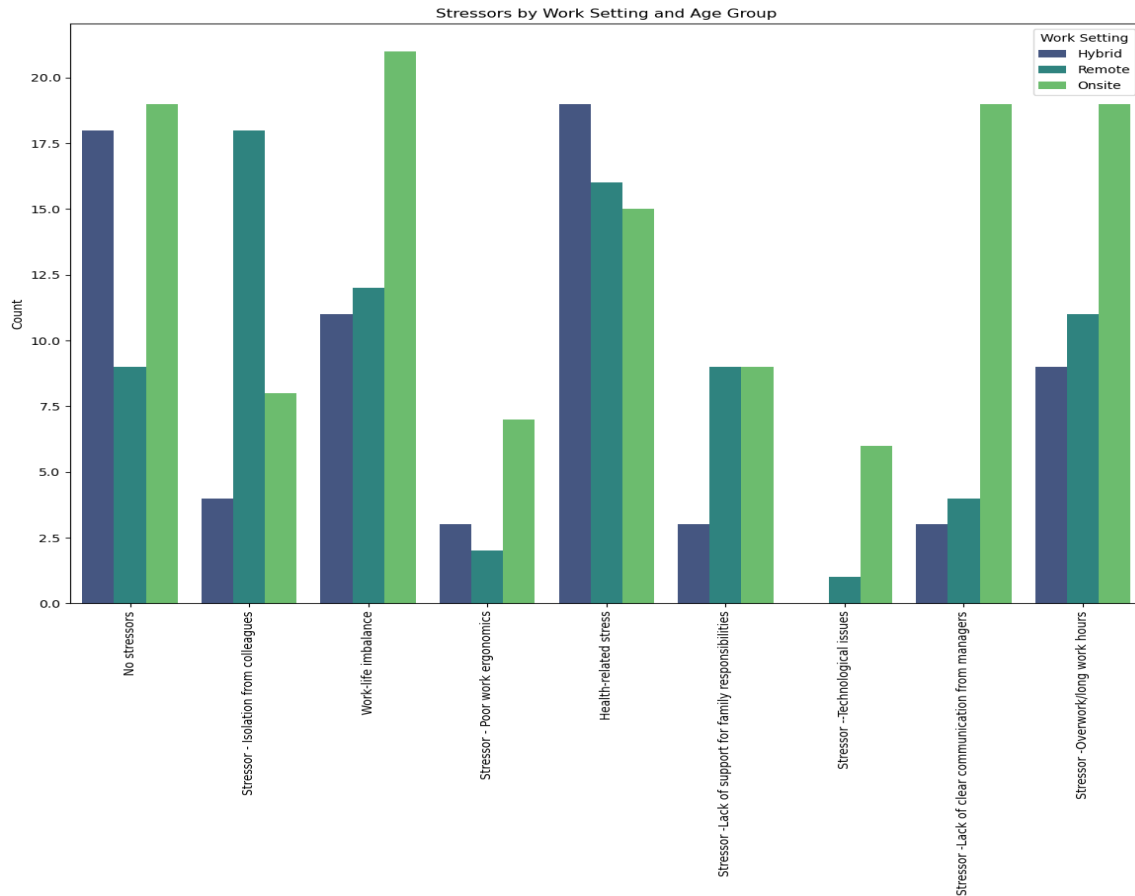


Figure 4.3 Stressors by Work Setting and Age Group *(Source: created by the author)*

iii. Key Observations

- a. No Stressors: 46 respondents feel there are no stressors for them in any work settings, which comprises 29% of the total respondents.
- b. Isolation from Colleagues: This stressor is more prevalent in remote work settings, where 18 respondents reported the highest number as compared to hybrid and on-site settings. Whereas 30 respondents reported this as a stressor, which comprises 19 % of the total respondents.

- c. Work-life Imbalance: This stressor is significant across all work settings, but it is particularly notable in Onsite work settings, with 21 respondents facing this stressor. 28 % of respondents reported work-life imbalance as the common stressor.
- d. Poor Work Ergonomics: This stressor is more commonly reported in onsite work settings, due to the physical setup of the workplace as compared to other settings. 8% of the total respondents reported this stressor.
- e. Health-related Stress: 50 respondents, which is 32% of the total respondents, had Health-related stress as a common concern across all work settings, with a slightly higher prevalence in hybrid settings.
- f. Lack of Support for Family Responsibilities: This stressor is more frequently reported in onsite and remote work settings, indicating a need for better support systems for family responsibilities in such environments. 13% of respondents reported this as a stressor while working in different work settings.
- g. Technological Issues: 4 % of respondents reported technological issues as one of the stressors while working in different work settings.
- h. Lack of Clear Communication from Managers: This stressor is significant in onsite work settings, highlighting the challenges of maintaining clear communication. 17% of respondents reported this as one of the stressors.
- i. Overwork/Long Work Hours: Overwork and long work hours are common stressors across all work settings, with a notable prevalence in on-site settings. 25% of respondents reported this as one of the common stressors in different work settings.

iv. Overall Insights:

- Remote Work: Isolation from colleagues, health-related stress, work-life imbalance, and long working hours are the major stressors.
- Onsite Work: Work-life imbalance, health-related stress, lack of clear communication from the manager, and long working hours are significant stressors.
- Hybrid Work: Work-Life Imbalance and health-related stress are common concerns.

This combined visualisation provides a comprehensive view of the stressors experienced by females in different work settings and age groups, helping to identify areas where organisations can improve support and reduce stress.

4.2.2. Experiment 2

i. Effect of Stressors on Mental Well-being

The objective of this experiment was to identify the effect of stressors on the mental well-being of employees working in different settings.

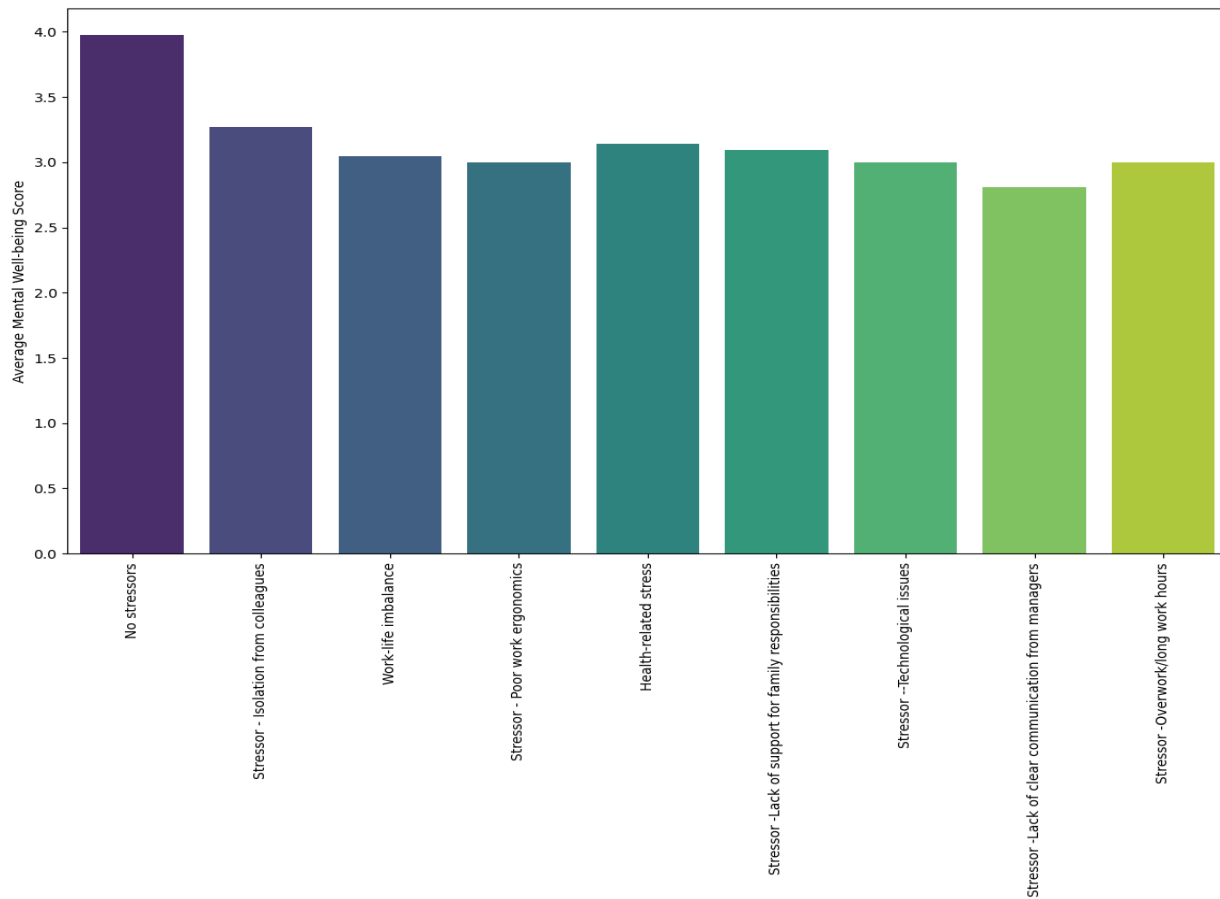


Figure 4.3 Effects of Stressors on Mental Well-being (Source: created by the author)

Stressor	Count	Percentage	Average Mental Well-being score
No stressors	46	29.10%	3.97
Isolation from colleagues	30	19.00%	3.46
Work-life imbalance	44	27.80%	3.13
Poor work ergonomics	12	7.60%	3
Health-related stress	50	31.60%	3.18
Lack of support for family responsibilities	21	13.30%	3.19
Technological issues	7	4.40%	3.28
Lack of clear communication from managers	26	16.50%	2.96
Overwork / long work hours	39	24.70%	3.10

Table 4.2 Effects of Stressors on Mental Well-being

ii. Key Observations

- a. No Stressors: Individuals who report no stressors have the highest average mental well-being score of 3.97, indicating a positive mental state.
- b. Isolation from Colleagues: This stressor significantly lowers the average mental well-being score of 3.46, highlighting the negative impact of social isolation.
- c. Work-life Imbalance: Work-life imbalance is associated with an average mental well-being score of 3.13, indicating the impact on mental well-being.
- d. Poor Work Ergonomics: Poor work ergonomics also negatively affects mental well-being, though to a lesser extent than some other stressors, with a score of 3.
- e. Health-related Stress: Health-related stress has a notable negative impact on mental well-being, with a score of 3.18.
- f. Lack of Support for Family Responsibilities: This stressor is associated with an average mental well-being score of 3.19, emphasising the importance of support for family responsibilities.
- g. Technological Issues: Technological issues negatively affect mental well-being, though the impact is moderate compared to other stressors, with a score of 3.28.
- h. Lack of Clear Communication from Managers: This stressor significantly lowers the average mental well-being, with a score of 2.96, indicating the importance of clear communication.
- i. Overwork/Long Work Hours: Overwork and long work hours are associated with a lower average mental well-being score of 3.10, highlighting the stress caused by excessive work demands.

iii. Overall Insights:

- a. Positive Mental Well-being: Individuals with no stressors report the highest mental well-being score of 3.97.
- b. Moderate Impact on Mental Well-being: Isolation from colleagues, work-life imbalance, health-related stress, Technological issues, and long working hours are among the stressors with a moderate impact on mental well-being, with a score ranging from 3.18-3.46.
- c. Negative Impact: Lack of clear communication from the manager, poor work ergonomics, long working hours, and work-life imbalance hurt mental well-being, with a score ranging from 2.96- 3.13.

4.2.3. Experiment 3

i. Relationship between Organisational Support Policies and Mental Well-being

The objective of this experiment was to evaluate the relationship between organisational support policies that help the female workforce have a better work-life balance and their mental wellbeing.

The data revealed the following:

- a. Supportive Policies: 94 respondents found flexible working hours, 70 respondents found health-related leave policies (e.g., menstrual leave), and 52 respondents found family support (e.g., childcare support) would help them manage their job effectively with better mental health. 43 respondents felt that regular check-ins with managers and providing mental health support resources would help them manage their jobs effectively.
- b. Organisational Support: 66 respondents rated their organisation's support positively, with ratings of 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. However, 20 respondents expressed dissatisfaction

with the level of support provided. The remaining 72 respondents expressed medium satisfaction with organisational support.

Ratings	Organisation Policy	Mental Wellbeing
5	12	10
4	54	71
3	72	61
2	13	13
1	7	3

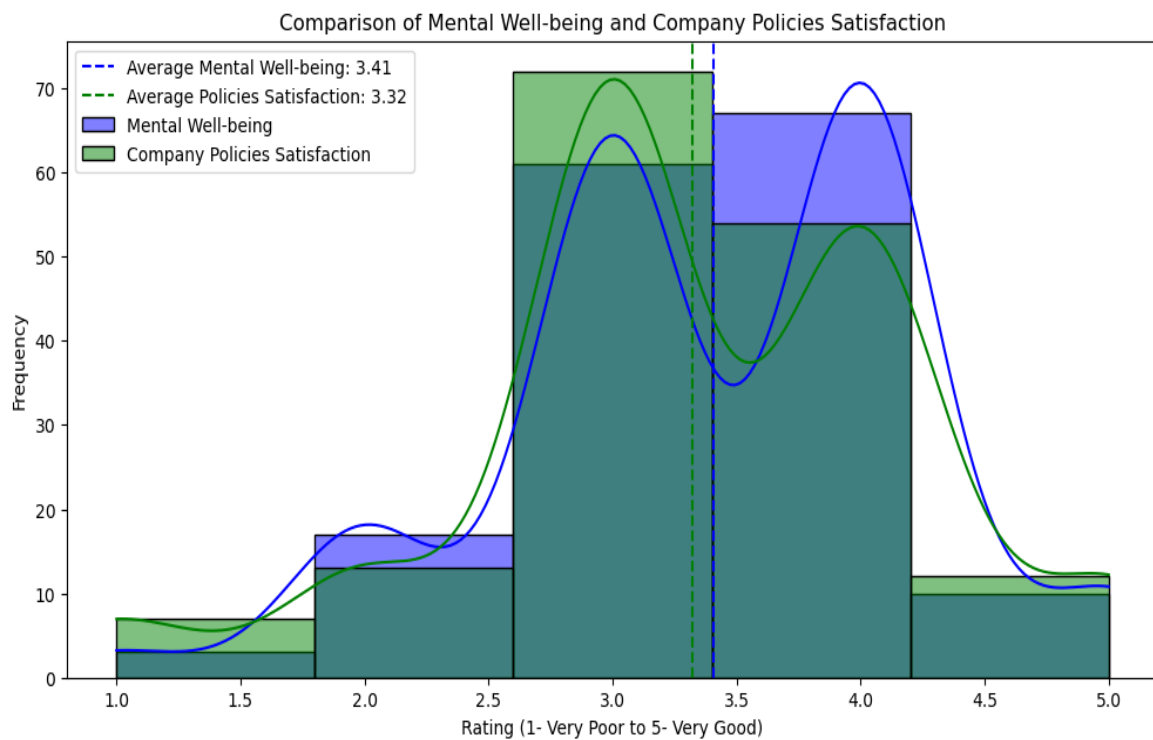


Figure 4.5 Comparison of Mental Well-being and Company Policies Satisfaction (*Source: created by the author*)

The visualisation provided compares the distribution of ratings for mental well-being and company policy satisfaction among employees. Here are the key points and insights derived from the comparison:

1. Mental Well-being Distribution:

- The ratings for mental well-being range from 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Very Good).
- The average mental well-being score of 3.41 is indicated by the blue dashed line, showing the central tendency of how employees rate their overall mental well-being.

2. Company Policies Satisfaction Distribution:

- The ratings for company policy satisfaction also range from 1 (Very Dissatisfied) to 5 (Very Satisfied).
- The average company policies satisfaction score of 3.32 is indicated by the green dashed line, showing the central tendency of how employees rate their satisfaction with the organisation's policies and support.

ii. Key Observations:

- a. Overlap in Distribution: There is a noticeable overlap in the distribution of ratings for mental well-being and company policy satisfaction. This suggests that employees who rate their mental well-being highly also tend to rate their satisfaction with company policies, and vice versa.
- b. Average Ratings: The average ratings for both mental well-being and company policy satisfaction are close to each other. This indicates a potential correlation between how employees feel about their mental well-being and their satisfaction with company policies.

iii. Explanation of the Relationship:

- a. **Positive Correlation:** Visualisation suggests a positive correlation between company policy satisfaction and mental well-being. Employees who are satisfied with their organisation's policies and support are more likely to report higher mental well-being. This can be attributed to the fact that supportive and well-structured company policies can reduce stress, provide a sense of security, and promote a healthy work-life balance, all of which contribute to better mental well-being.
- b. **Impact of Supportive Policies:** Supportive company policies, such as flexible working hours, access to mental health resources, and family support policies, can significantly impact employees' mental well-being. When employees feel that their organisation cares about their well-being and provides the necessary support, they are more likely to experience lower stress levels and higher overall mental well-being.
- c. **Need for Improvement:** If there is a gap between the average ratings of mental well-being and company policy satisfaction, it indicates areas where the organisation can improve its policies to better support employees' mental health. Addressing these gaps can lead to improved employee satisfaction and well-being.

iv. Overall Insights:

- The relationship between company policy satisfaction and mental well-being highlights the importance of having supportive and employee-centric policies in place. Organisations that prioritise their employees' well-being through effective policies are likely to see higher levels of mental well-being among their workforces.

4.2.4. Experiment 4

i. Understanding Coping Strategies

This experiment was conducted to identify coping strategies that women employees use to manage work-related stress. The percentages of employees using each strategy are as follows:

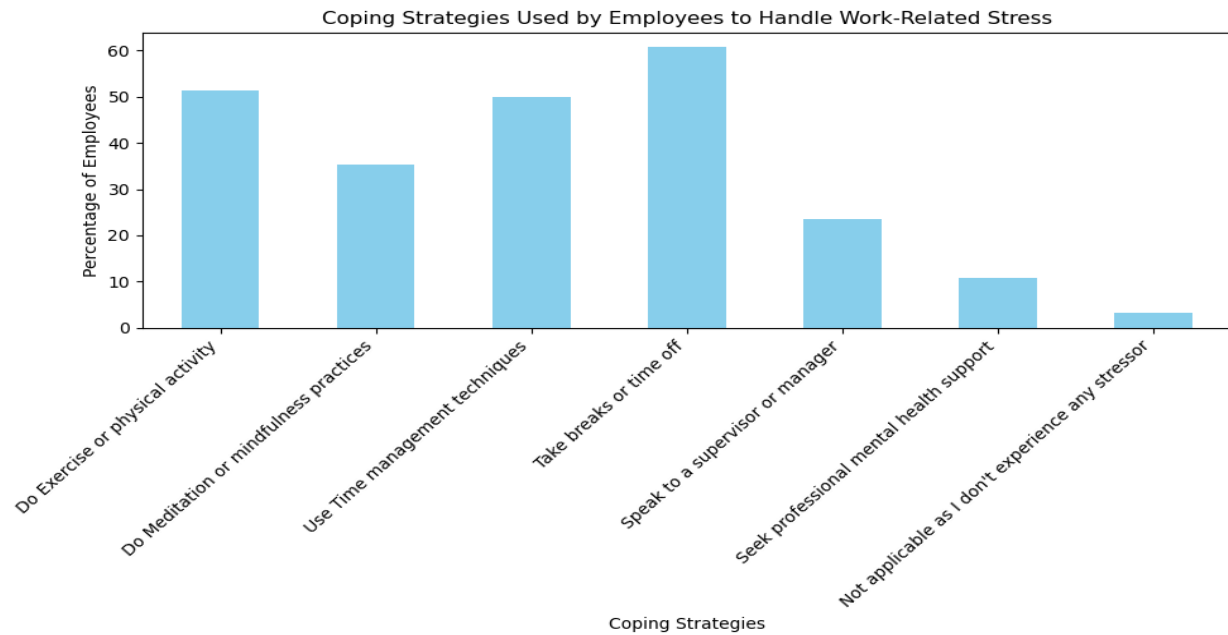


Figure 4.6 Coping Strategies Used by Employees to Manage Work-Related Stress (*Source: created by the author*)

Coping Strategies	Count	Percentage
Exercise or physical activity	81	51.27
Do Meditation or mindfulness practices	56	35.44
Use Time management techniques	79	50.00
Take breaks or time off	96	60.76
Speak to a supervisor or manager	37	23.42
Seek professional mental health support	17	10.76
Not applicable as I don't experience any stressor	5	3.16

Table 4.3 Coping Strategies and Their Count

ii. Insights

- a. Taking Breaks or Time Off: This is the most common strategy, with 61% of employees using it to deal with stress. It highlights the importance of rest and regaining in maintaining mental well-being.
- b. Exercise or Physical Activity: Engaging in physical activities is also a popular method, used by 51% of employees. This underscores the role of physical health in managing stress.
- c. Time Management Techniques: About 50% of employees use time management techniques, indicating that better organisation can help reduce stress.
- d. Meditation or Mindfulness Practices: These practices are used by 35% of employees, showing a significant interest in mental relaxation techniques.
- e. Speaking to Supervisors or Managers: Only 23% of employees use this strategy, suggesting that there might be room for improving communication and support from management.
- f. Professional Mental Health Support: This is the least used strategy, with only 11% of employees seeking professional help. This could indicate a need for better access to mental health resources or for reducing the stigma around seeking help.

4.2.5. Experiment 5

Work Stress - *f(work settings, caregiving responsibilities)*

The objective of this experiment was to statistically evaluate the impact of work settings and caregiving responsibilities on the stress of working women in the IT sector. The following three hypotheses were tested.

H₀₁: There is no impact of work setting (remote, hybrid, onsite) on the stress level of women working in the IT sector.

Test Conducted

One-way analysis of variance between the mental stress levels of women working in remote, hybrid and onsite work settings was conducted to identify if any significant variation in mental stress levels between the three groups existed.

Formula Used

$$F = MSB / MSW$$

Explanation

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) compares means among three or more groups. $F = MSB / MSW$, where MSB is the mean square between groups and MSW is the mean square within groups.

Substituted Values

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	Df	Mean Square (MS)	F
Between Groups	0.988	2	0.494	0.381
Within Groups	201.195	155	1.298	
Total	202.184	157		

Summary Statistics

Work Setting	Mean (Mental Stress Level)	SD	N
Hybrid	2.213	1.141	47
Onsite	2.254	1.146	67
Remote	2.409	1.127	44

Inference Drawn

It was observed that the mental stress level of women working in remote settings was highest at mean = 2.409, followed by onsite (mean = 2.254) and lowest for women working in hybrid settings (2.213). However, the analysis of variance revealed that the difference in mental stress level between the groups was not statistically significant ($F = 0.381$, $p = 0.684$). Hence, H_{01} is accepted, and this sub-experiment concluded that there is no direct impact of work setting on the mental stress level of women working in IT settings. However, a scope lies in further investigating the impact of caregiving responsibilities on the mental stress level of working women in IT.

H_{02} : There is no significant impact of caregiving responsibilities on the mental stress of women working in the IT industry.

Test Conducted

An independent Samples t-test was conducted to identify if there was a statistically significant difference between the mental stress levels of women working in the IT industry due to caregiving responsibility.

Formula Used

$$t = (\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2) / \sqrt{((s_1^2/n_1) + (s_2^2/n_2))}$$

Explanation

This formula compares the means between two independent groups. It calculates the t-statistics by dividing the difference in group means by the standard error of the difference. This test assesses whether the observed difference is statistically significant.

Substituted Values

$$\bar{x}_1 = 1.83, \quad \bar{x}_2 = 0.84, \quad s_1 = 1.64, \quad s_2 = 1.21, \quad n_1 = 139, \quad n_2 = 19$$
$$t = 2.521, p = 0.013$$

Summary Statistics

Group	Mean (Mental Stress Level)	Standard Deviation	Sample Size
Caregivers	1.83	1.64	139
Non-Caregivers	0.84	1.21	19

Inference Drawn

It was observed that the mental stress levels of women with caregiving responsibility (Mean = 1.83, SD = 1.64) were higher than those of women with no caregiving responsibilities (Mean 0.84, SD = 1.21). On performing the t-test, the p-value was less than 0.05, suggesting the null hypothesis H_{02} is rejected. Hence, it is inferred that there is a significant difference in mental stress levels between caregivers and non-caregivers.

However, there is a scope to evaluate the interactive effect of work setting and caregiving responsibilities on the mental stress of women working in the IT sector.

H₀₃: There is no interactive effect of work setting and caregiving responsibilities on the mental stress level of women working in the IT industry.

Test Conducted

To understand the interactive effect of the two variables (caregiving responsibilities and work settings) on mental stressors of women working in the IT sector, a two-way analysis of variance was conducted.

Formula Used

$$F = MSB / MSB$$

Explanation

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) compares the means between groups and checks whether their differences are statistically significant. Two-way ANOVA additionally examines the main effects of each factor and their interaction effect.

Substituted Values

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F	p-value
Work Setting	1.002	2	0.501	0.389	0.678
Caregiving Responsibilities	0.710	1	0.710	0.551	0.459
Work Setting x Caregiving Responsibilities	4.632	2	2.316	1.797	0.169
Residual	195.853	152	1.289		

Summary Statistics

Work Setting	Mean (Caregiving)	SD (Caregiving)	Mean (No Caregiving)	SD (No Caregiving)
Hybrid	2.26	1.18	1.75	0.50
Onsite	2.21	1.16	2.50	1.08
Remote	2.51	1.14	1.60	0.55

Interaction Plot

In the below interaction graph, which shows the mean stress for remote, hybrid and onsite working females, ‘0’ means females without caregiving responsibilities and ‘1’ means females with caregiving responsibilities. In both hybrid and onsite settings, the mental stress of caregiving professionals is low compared to in remote settings. It indicates that working women with caregiving responsibilities have higher stress in remote work settings; however, this relation is not statistically significant, which could be due to the sample size of remote working females in the total sample. On the other side the line plot indicates, women with no caregiving responsibility show a reverse trend. They find on-site jobs more stressful than those in hybrid settings and report the lowest stress in remote settings.

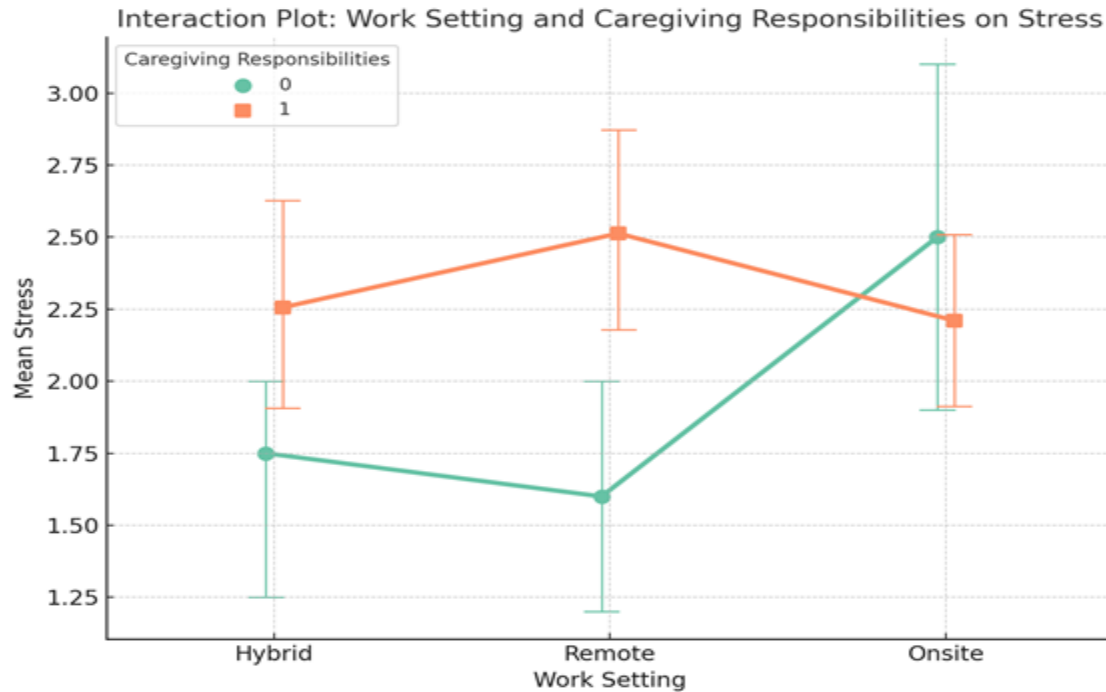


Figure 4.7 Work Setting and Care Giving Responsibilities on Stress (*Source: created by the author*)

Inference Drawn

It was observed that both work setting and caregiving responsibilities, as well as their interaction, do not show statistically significant effects on the mental stress level of women.

Specifically:

Work Setting main effect ($p = 0.678$) → Not significant

Caregiving Responsibilities main effect ($p = 0.459$) → Not significant

Interaction effect ($p = 0.169$) → Not significant

Thus, the hypothesis H_{03} is accepted; there is no significant interactive effect of work setting and caregiving responsibilities on mental stress.

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Used	Test Statistic	Conclusion
H ₀₁	There is no impact of work setting (remote, hybrid, onsite) on the stress level of women working in the IT sector.	ANOVA	F = 0.681, p = 0.412	Accepted
H ₀₂	There is no significant impact of caregiving responsibilities on the mental stress of women working in IT industry.	t-test	t = 2.521, p = 0.013	Rejected
H ₀₃	There is no interactive effect of work setting and caregiving responsibilities on the mental stress level of women working in the IT industry.	Two-Way ANOVA	F = 1.797, p = 0.169	Accepted

4.2.6. Experiment 6

Stress and Mental Well-being - f (Motherhood, Menstruation and Menopause)

The objective of this experiment was to statistically evaluate the impact of the key biological life-stage factors, motherhood, menstruation, and menopause, on the stress and mental well-being of women working in the IT sector.

The above charts visualise the total number of individuals by life stages and the overlap between the life stages of women: Menstruation, Motherhood, and Menopause.

1. Bar Chart (Left) – Shows the total number of individuals experiencing each life stage:

Menstruation: 117, Motherhood: 88, Menopause: 41

2. Venn Diagram (Right) – Visualizes the overlap between three life stages where 65 individuals experience both Menstruation and Motherhood, 23 individuals experience both Motherhood and Menopause, no overlap between Menstruation and Menopause or all three stages simultaneously.

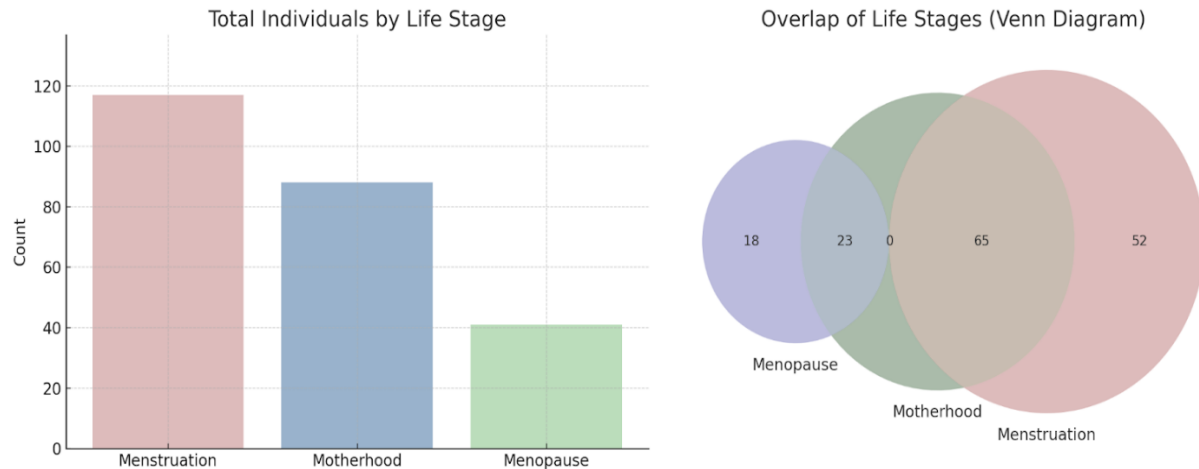


Figure 4.8 Total Individuals by Life Stage and Overlap of Life Stages (*Source: created by the author*)

With the aforesaid data set, four hypotheses were tested:

H₀₄: There is no relationship between menstruation symptoms (severity) on work setting satisfaction.

Test Conducted

A Pearson correlation test was conducted between menstruation-related symptoms affecting work performance and work setting satisfaction to assess whether women experiencing more severe symptoms report lower job satisfaction.

Formula Used

$$r = \frac{\sum ((x - \bar{x}) (y - \bar{y}))}{(n-1) s_x s_y}$$

Explanation

Pearson correlation measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. A negative value of r indicates that as menstruation symptoms severity increases, satisfaction with the work setting decreases.

Substituted Values

Metric	Value
Correlation Coefficient (r)	-0.179
p-value	0.027
Sample Size (n)	158

Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Menstruation Symptoms (Severity)	2.52	1.13	158
Work Setting Satisfaction	3.53	0.86	158

Interpretation Plot

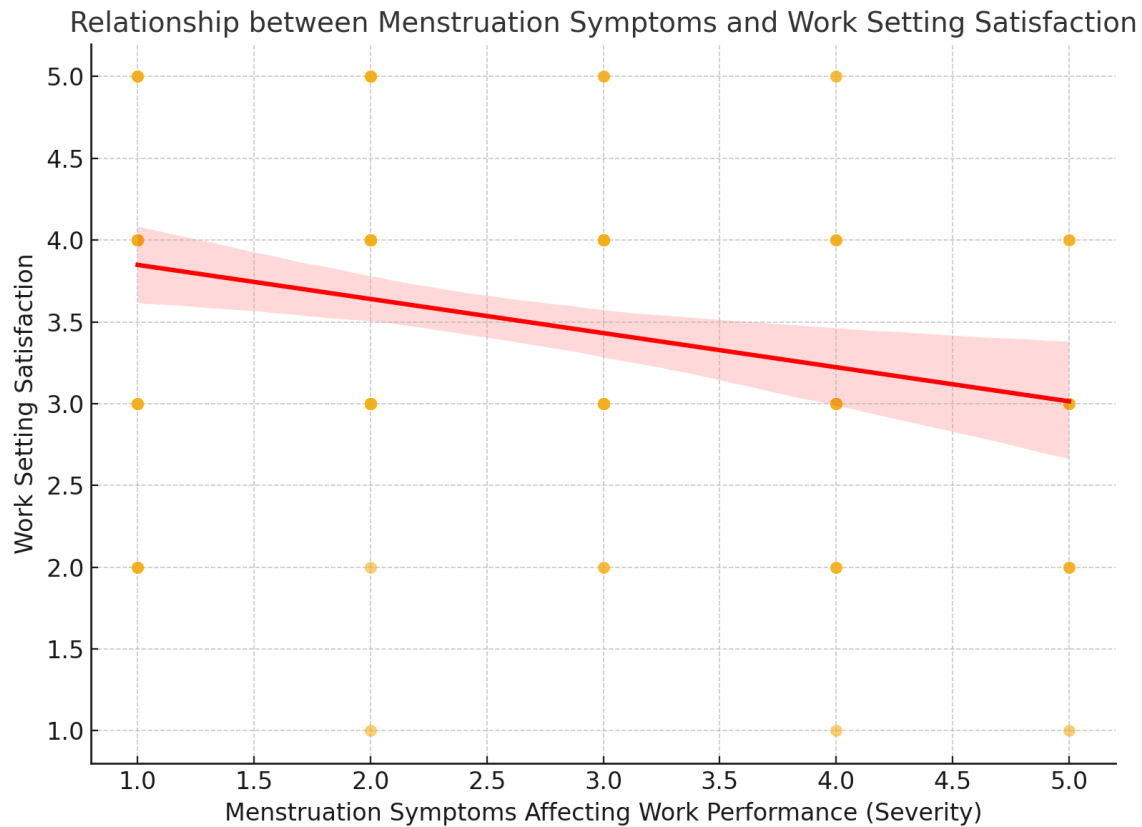


Figure 4.9 Relationship between Menstruation Symptoms and Work Setting Satisfaction

(Source: created by the author)

Inference Drawn

The Pearson correlation coefficient was found to be $r = -0.179$, with a $p\text{-value} = 0.027$. Since the $p\text{-value}$ is less than 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant. Thus, women experiencing higher menstruation-related symptoms report lower work setting satisfaction. Therefore, H_{04} is rejected, indicating there is a significant and negative relation between the two variables. As the severity of menstruation symptoms increases, the work setting satisfaction decreases.

H₀₅: There is no relationship between menopause symptoms (severity) and workplace stress.

Test Conducted

A Pearson correlation test was conducted between menopause-related symptoms affecting work performance and workplace stress self-rating to assess whether women experiencing more severe symptoms report higher workplace stress.

Formula Used

$$r = \frac{\sum ((x - \bar{x}) (y - \bar{y}))}{(n-1) s_x s_y}$$

Explanation

Pearson correlation measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. A positive value of r indicates that as menopause symptoms increase, workplace stress also increases.

Substituted Values

Metric	Value
Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.090
p-value	0.261
Sample Size (n)	158

Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Menopause-related Symptoms (Severity)	0.79	1.27	158
Workplace Stress (Self Rating)	2.28	1.13	158

Interpretation Plot

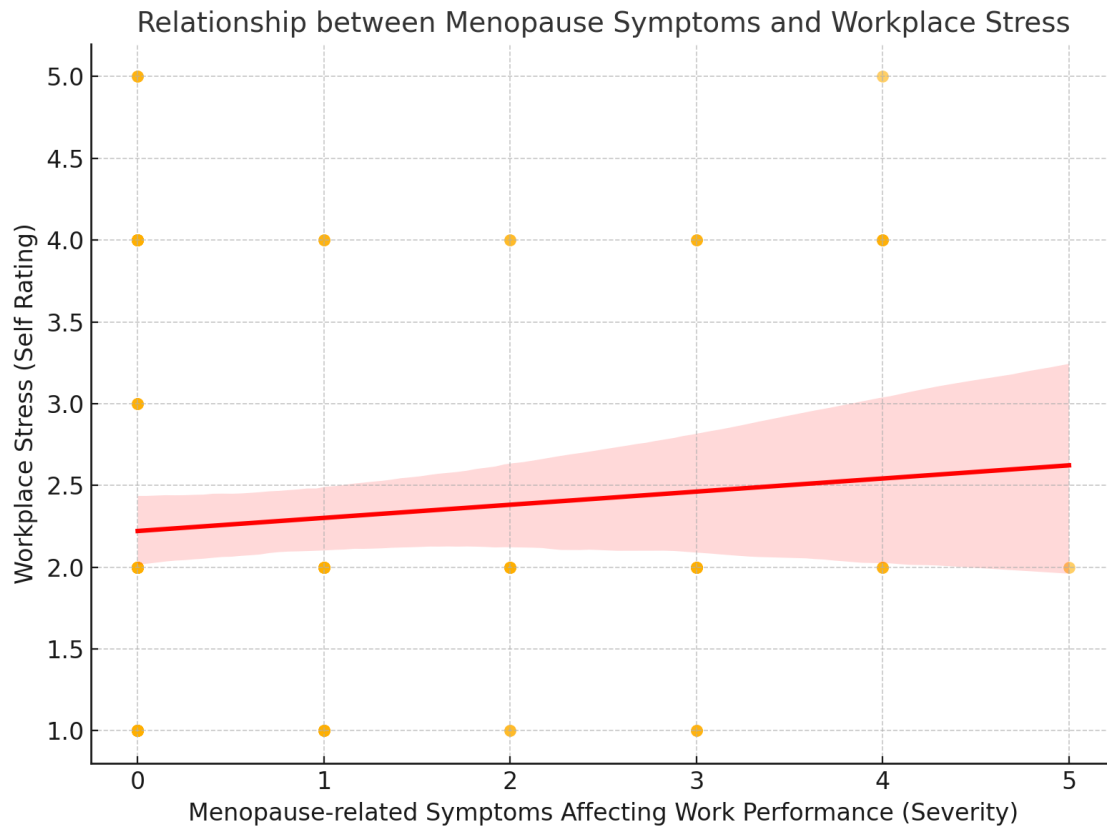


Figure 4.10 Relationship between Menopause Symptoms and Workplace Stress (*Source: created by the author*)

Inference Drawn

The Pearson correlation coefficient was found to be $r = 0.090$, with a $p\text{-value} = 0.261$. Since the $p\text{-value}$ is greater than 0.05, the relationship is not statistically significant. Thus, although there is a slight positive association, women experiencing menopause-related symptoms do not show significantly higher workplace stress. Therefore, Hypothesis H_{05} is accepted, which shows there is no relation between menopause related symptoms and workplace stress.

H₀₆: There is no relation between women's experience of menopause-related symptoms and their mental well-being.

Test Conducted

A Pearson correlation test was conducted between menopause-related symptoms affecting work performance and overall mental well-being scores to assess whether women experiencing more severe symptoms report lower mental well-being.

Formula Used

$$r = \frac{\sum ((x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y}))}{(n-1) s_x s_y}$$

Explanation

Pearson correlation measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. The negative value of r indicates that as menopause symptoms increase, mental well-being decreases.

Substituted Values

Metric	Value
Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.068
p-value	0.395
Sample Size (n)	158

Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Menopause-related Symptoms (Severity)	0.79	1.27	158
Mental Well-being Score	3.46	0.81	158

Interpretation Plot

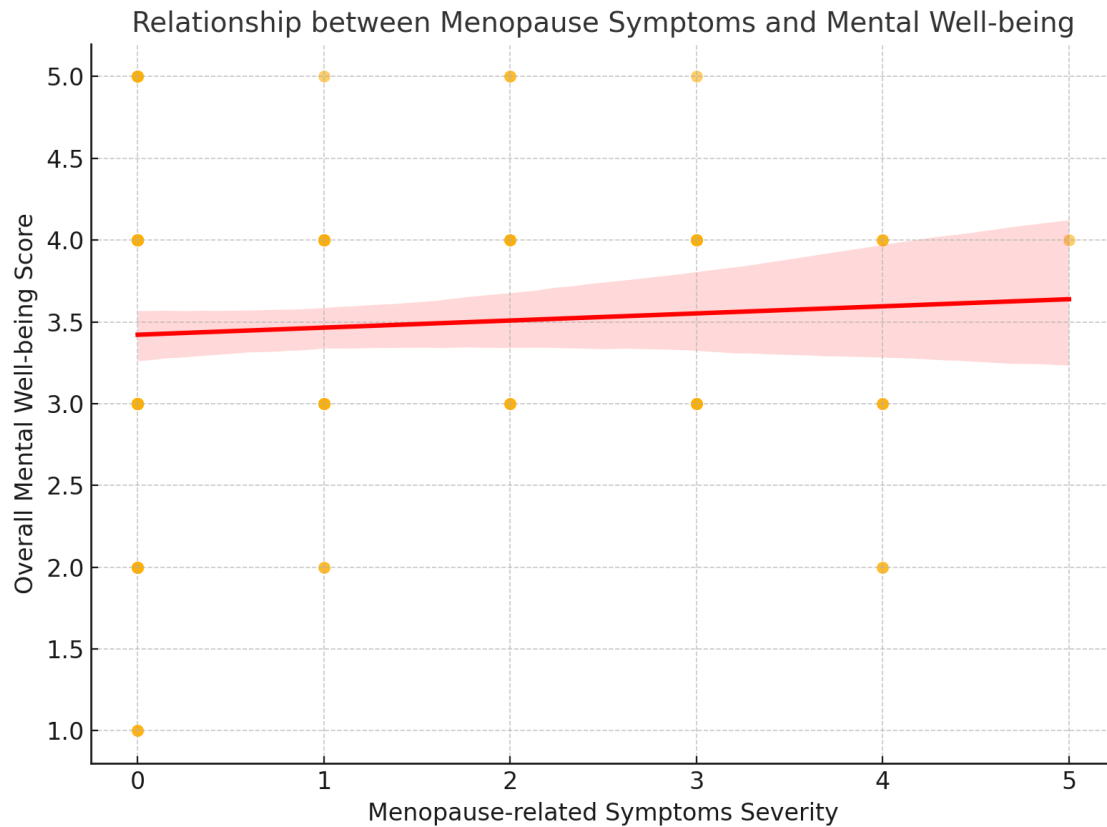


Figure 4.11 Relationship between Menopause and Mental Well-being (*Source: created by the author*)

Inference Drawn

The Pearson correlation coefficient was found to be $r = 0.068$, with a $p\text{-value} = 0.395$. Since the $p\text{-value}$ is greater than 0.05, the relationship is not statistically significant. Thus, although there is a slight positive association, women experiencing menopause-related symptoms do not show any changes in mental well-being. Therefore, Hypothesis H_{06} is accepted.

H₀₇: There is no significant difference in stress levels of women having caregiving (motherhood) responsibilities than those who do not have such responsibilities.

Test Conducted

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether mothers report significantly higher levels of stress due to caregiving responsibilities compared to non-mothers. The variable 'Caregiving for Child Care' was used as a proxy for motherhood, while stress levels were measured based on responses to the item 'Stress due to Caregiving responsibilities'.

Formula Used

$$F = MSB / MSW$$

Substituted Values

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	Df	Mean Square (MS)	F	p-value
Group (Mother vs Non - Mother)	82.629	1	82.629	59.04	< 0.001
Residual (Error)	220.719	157	1.406		
Total	303.348	158			

Summary Statistics

Group	Mean Stress Due to Caregiving	Standard Deviation	N
Mother	2.47	1.52	88
Non-Mother	0.76	1.20	70

Interpretation Plot

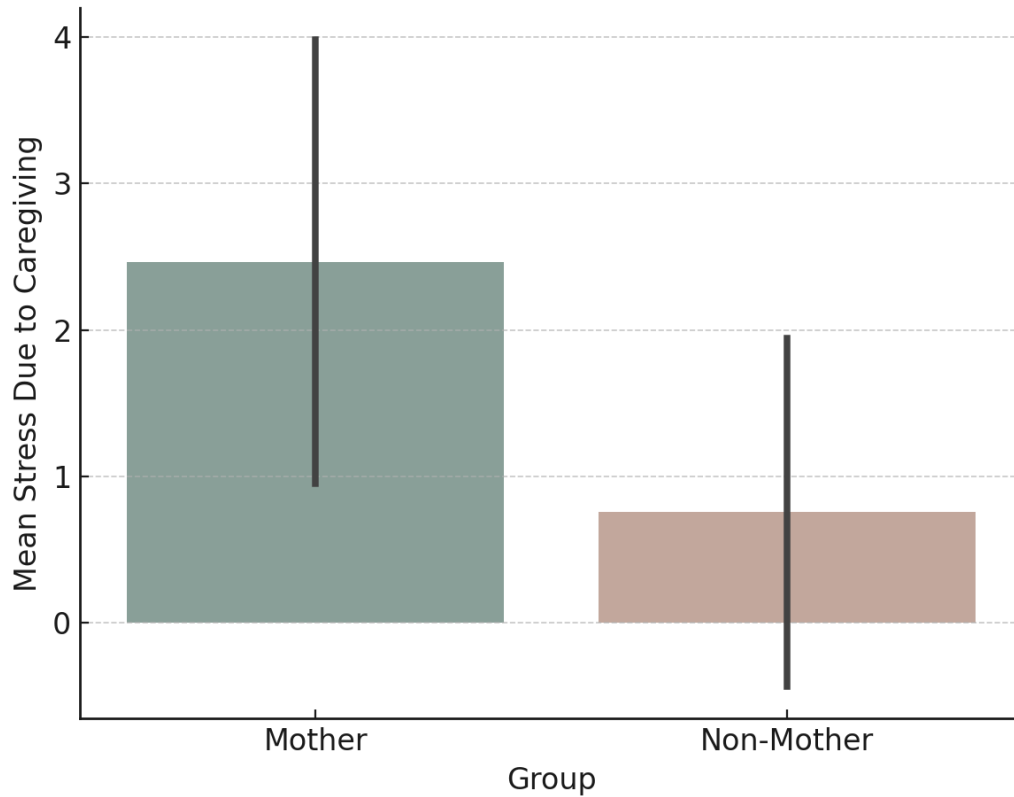


Figure 4.12 Stress Due to Caregiving by Motherhood Status (*Source: created by the author*)

Inference Drawn

The analysis revealed that mothers ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.52$) reported significantly higher stress due to caregiving responsibilities compared to non-mothers ($M = 0.76$, $SD = 1.20$), with an F-statistic of 59.04 and a p-value of less than 0.001. These results indicate a strong and statistically significant difference in the stress levels; hence, Hypothesis H_{07} is rejected. Thus, caregiving demands contribute to stress levels in mothers employed in the IT sector.

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Used	Test Statistic	Conclusion
H ₀₄	There is no relationship between menstruation symptoms (severity) on work setting satisfaction.	Correlation	$r = -0.179$ $p = 0.027$	Rejected
H ₀₅	There is no relationship between menopause symptoms (severity) and workplace stress.	Correlation	$r = 0.090$, $p = 0.261$	Accepted
H ₀₆	There is no relation between women's experience of menopause-related symptoms and their mental well-being.	Correlation	$r = 0.068$, $p = 0.395$	Accepted
H ₀₇	There is no significant difference in stress levels of women having caregiving (motherhood) responsibilities than those who do not have such responsibilities.	ANOVA	$F = 59.04$, $p < 0.001$	Rejected

4.2.7. Experiment 7

Work setting and stress due to isolation and work-life balance

This experiment aimed to investigate how remote work settings affect stressors among women, particularly regarding feelings of isolation and work-life balance. It assessed whether remote work increases life-stage-related stress and how these effects are compared to hybrid or onsite arrangements.

H₀₈: There is no significant difference in the levels of isolation reported by women working remotely compared to those working onsite or in hybrid settings.

Test Conducted

A One-Way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether feelings of isolation differ significantly based on work setting (Remote, Hybrid, Onsite).

Formula Used

$$F = MSB / MSW$$

Explanation

ANOVA compares the mean isolation scores across multiple independent groups. A significant F value would indicate that work setting impacts feelings of isolation among women.

Substituted Values

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	Df	Mean Square (MS)	F	p-value
Between Groups	10.982	2	5.491	3.549	0.031
Within Groups	237.316	154	1.541	-	-
Total	248.298	156	-	-	-

Summary Statistics

Work Setting	Mean Isolation Score	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Remote	2.75	1.23	46
Hybrid	2.28	1.13	63
Onsite	2.23	1.11	49

Interpretation Plot

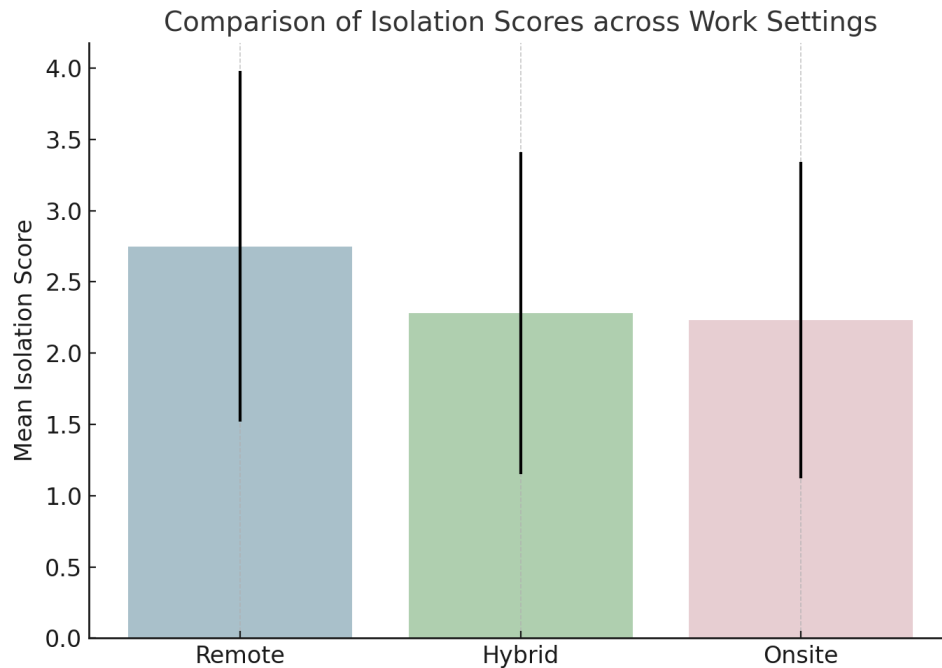


Figure 4.13 Comparison of Isolation Scores Across Work Settings (*Source: created by the author*)

Inference Drawn

The One-Way ANOVA analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in feelings of isolation across different work settings ($F = 3.549$, $p = 0.031$). Women working remotely reported the highest mean isolation score (Mean = 2.75) compared to those in hybrid (Mean = 2.28) and onsite (Mean = 2.23) settings. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that the work setting significantly influences feelings of isolation. Thus, Hypothesis H_{08} is Rejected.

H₀₉: There is no significant difference in work-life balance management between women in remote work settings and those in hybrid or onsite settings.

Test Conducted

A One-Way ANOVA was conducted to compare the work-life imbalance scores among women working in remote, hybrid, and onsite settings.

Formula Used

$$F = MSB / MSW$$

Explanation

One-way ANOVA evaluates whether there are significant differences in the mean work-life imbalance scores across multiple independent groups. A significant F-statistics would suggest that work setting impacts the difficulty in managing work-life balance.

Substituted Values

Source	Sum of Squares (SS)	Df	Mean Square (MS)	F	p-value
Between Groups	0.176	2	0.088	0.432	0.650
Within Groups	31.571	155	0.204	-	-
Total	31.747	157	-	-	-

Summary Statistics

Work Setting	Mean Work-life Imbalance	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Hybrid	0.234	0.428	47
Onsite	0.313	0.467	67
Remote	0.273	0.451	44

Interpretation Plot

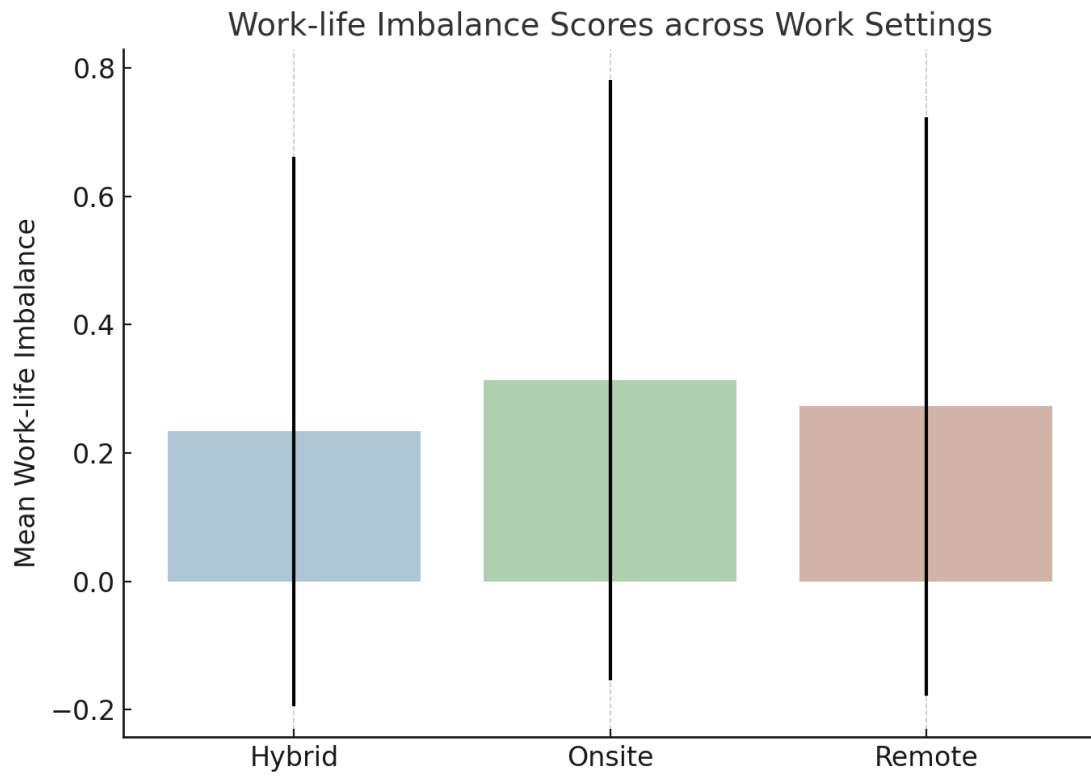


Figure 4.14 Work-life Imbalance Scores Across Work Settings (*Source: created by the author*)

Inference Drawn

The One-Way ANOVA analysis yielded an F-statistic of 0.432 with a p-value of 0.650. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the result is not statistically significant. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that women in remote work settings experience greater difficulty in managing work-life balance compared to their counterparts in hybrid and onsite settings. Thus, Hypothesis H_{09} is accepted.

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Used	Test Statistic	Conclusion
H ₀₈	There is no significant difference in the levels of isolation reported by women working remotely compared to those working onsite or in hybrid settings.	One-way ANOVA	F = 3.549, p = 0.031	Rejected
H ₀₉	There is no significant difference in work-life balance management between women in remote work settings and those in hybrid or onsite settings.	One-way ANOVA	F = 0.432, p = 0.650	Accepted

4.2.8. Experiment 8

Women's Supportive Policies, Stress and Mental Well-being

To examine the effect of women-supportive and general workplace policies on the mental well-being of women working remotely in the IT sector.

H₀₁₀: There is no significant relation between the perception of helpfulness of gender-supportive policies and the mental well-being of women.

Test Conducted

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between the perceived helpfulness of gender-supportive policies and mental well-being scores among remotely working women.

Formula Used

$$r = \frac{\sum ((x - \bar{x}) (y - \bar{y}))}{(n-1) s_x s_y}$$

Explanation

Pearson correlation measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. A positive correlation suggests that higher ratings of gender-supportive policies are associated with better mental well-being.

Substituted Values

Metric	Value
Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.287
p-value	0.001
Sample Size (n)	158

Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Perceived Helpfulness of Gender Policies	0.14	0.35	158
Mental Well-being Score	3.46	0.81	158

Interpretation Plot

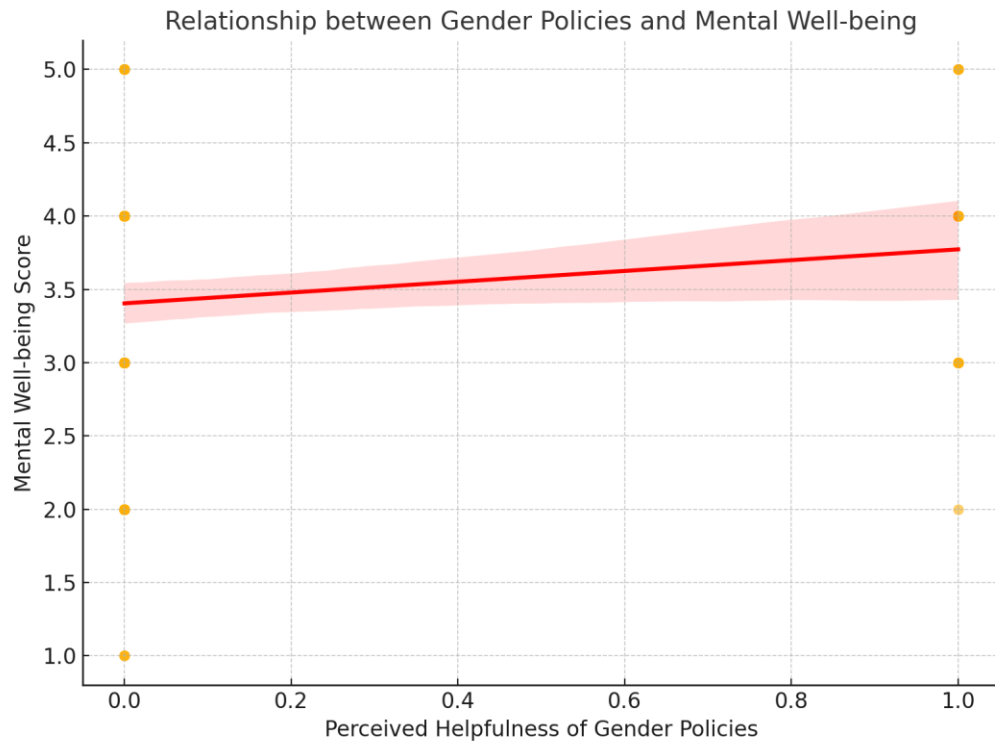


Figure 4.15 Relationship between Gender Policies and Mental Well-being (*Source: created by the author*)

Inference Drawn

The Pearson correlation coefficient was found to be $r = 0.287$ with a p-value of 0.001. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the result is statistically significant. Thus, women who rated their organisation's gender-supportive policies more highly than others reported better mental health. Therefore, Hypothesis H_{010} is Rejected.

H₀₁₁: There is no significant correlation between the lack of gender-specific workplace policies and stress levels among women.

Test Conducted

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the perceived helpfulness of gender-specific workplace policies and self-rated stress levels among women working in the IT sector.

Formula Used

$$r = \Sigma ((x - \bar{x}) (y - \bar{y})) / (n-1) s_x s_y$$

Explanation

Pearson correlation measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. A negative correlation would imply that lower perceived helpfulness of gender-specific workplace policies is associated with higher stress levels.

Substituted Values

Metric	Value
Correlation Coefficient (r)	-0.053
p-value	0.510
Sample Size (n)	158

Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Gender Policies Helpfulness Score	0.139	0.347	158
Stress Self-Rating	2.285	1.135	158

Interpretation Plot

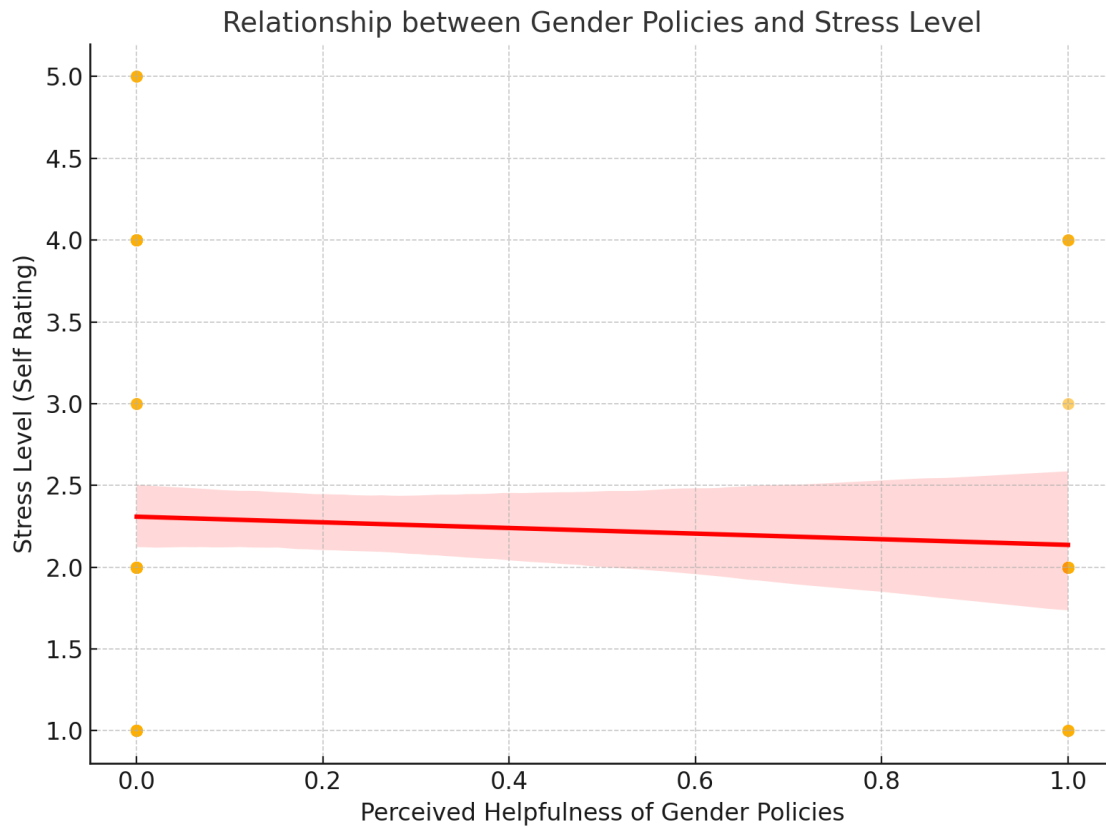


Figure 4.16 Relationship between Gender Policies and Stress Level (*Source: created by the author*)

Inference Drawn

The Pearson correlation coefficient was found to be $r = -0.053$ with a p-value of 0.510. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the relationship is not statistically significant. Thus, lower perceived helpfulness of gender-specific workplace policies does not significantly correlate with higher self-reported stress levels. Therefore, Hypothesis H_{011} is accepted.

This experiment evaluates the impact of gender-sensitive and general workplace policies on mental well-being.

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Used	Test Statistic	Conclusion
H ₀₁₀	There is no significant relation between the perception of helpfulness of gender-supportive policies and the mental well-being of women.	Correlation	$r = 0.287$, $p = 0.001$	Rejected
H ₀₁₁	There is no significant correlation between the lack of gender-specific workplace policies and stress levels among women.	Correlation	$r = -0.053$, $p = 0.510$	Accepted

4.2.9. Experiment 9

Mental Well-being - f (organisation policy, growth opportunities, work settings, managerial communication)

This experiment assesses how organisational support, communication, and career progression influence mental well-being.

Objective:

To study the influence of organisational support, managerial communication, and perceptions of career progression on the mental well-being of remotely working women in the IT sector.

H₀₁₂: There is no significant correlation between satisfaction with organisational policies and mental well-being.

Test Conducted

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to evaluate the relationship between satisfaction with organisational policies and mental well-being among women working remotely in the IT sector.

Formula Used

$$r = \frac{\sum ((x - \bar{x}) (y - \bar{y}))}{(n-1) s_x s_y}$$

Explanation

Pearson correlation measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. A positive correlation suggests that greater satisfaction with organisational policies is associated with higher mental well-being.

Substituted Values

Metric	Value
Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.497
p-value	< 0.001
Sample Size (n)	158

Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Organisation Policies Satisfaction	3.32	0.90	158
Mental Well-being Score	3.46	0.81	158

Interpretation Plot

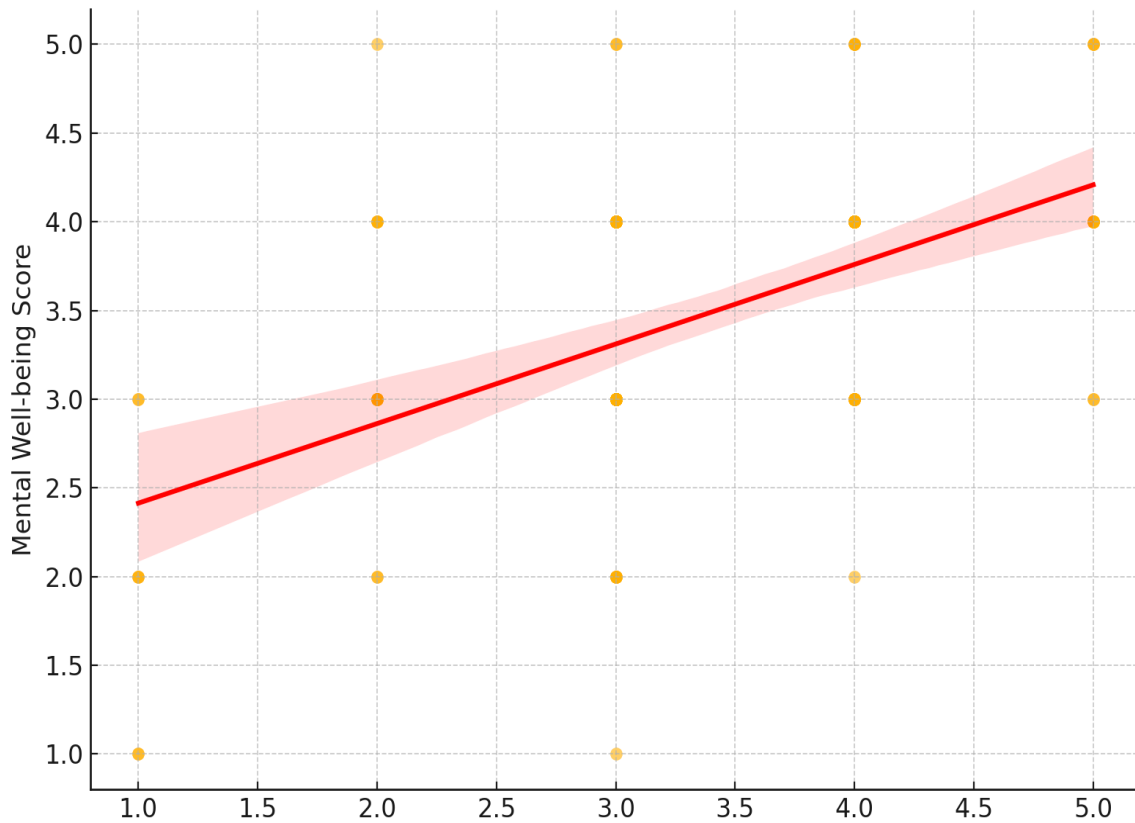


Figure 4.17 Relationship between Organisational Policies Satisfaction and Mental Well-being

(Source: created by the author)

Inference Drawn

The Pearson correlation coefficient was found to be $r = 0.497$ with a p-value less than 0.001. Since the p-value is highly significant, it can be concluded that higher satisfaction with organisational policies is positively associated with better mental well-being among women working remotely in the IT sector. Thus, Hypothesis H_{012} is Rejected.

H₀₁₃: There is no significant relation between perceptions of growth opportunities and mental well-being.

Test Conducted

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between perceptions of growth opportunities in the present work setting and mental well-being scores among women working remotely in the IT sector.

Formula Used

$$r = \frac{\sum ((x - \bar{x}) (y - \bar{y}))}{(n-1) s_x s_y}$$

Explanation

Pearson correlation measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. A positive correlation suggests that higher satisfaction with growth opportunities is associated with better mental well-being.

Substituted Values

Metric	Value
Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.431
p-value	< 0.001
Sample Size (n)	158

Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Growth Opportunities Score	4.06	1.23	158
Mental Well-being Score	3.46	0.81	158

Interpretation Plot

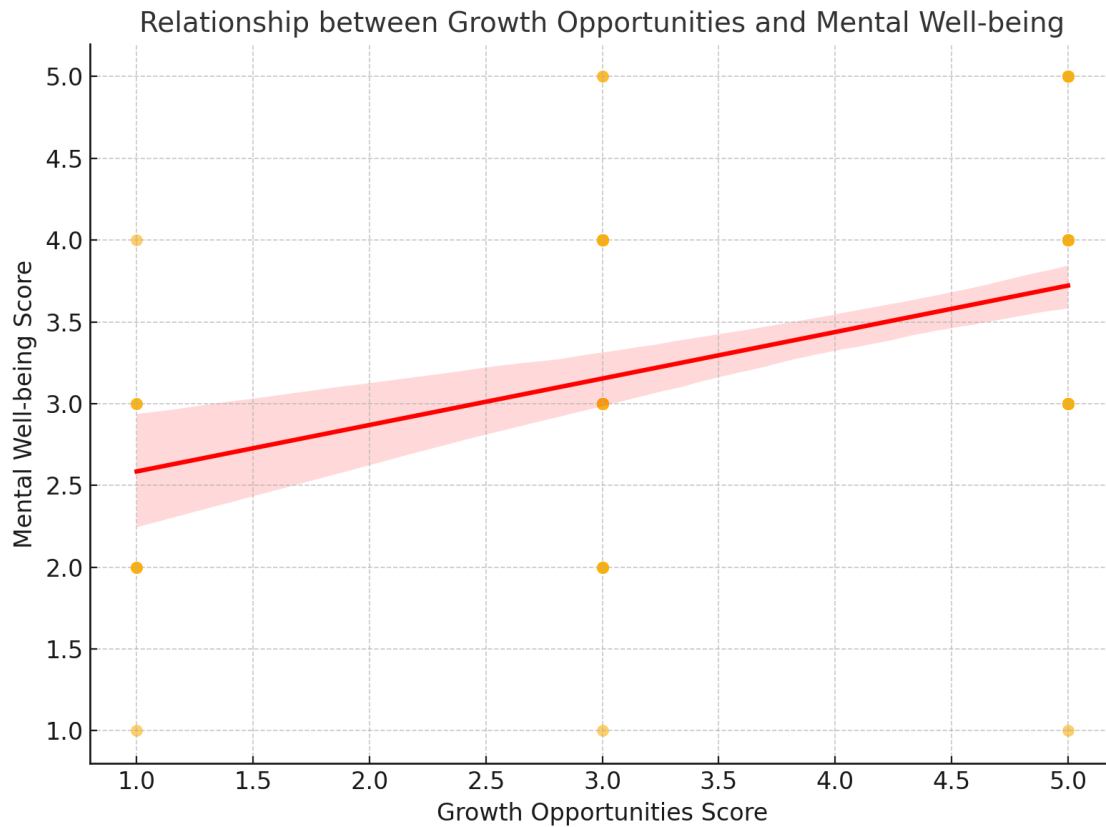


Figure 4.18 Relationship between Growth Opportunities and Mental Well-being (*Source: created by the author*)

Inference Drawn

The Pearson correlation coefficient was found to be $r = 0.431$ with a p-value less than 0.001. Since the p-value is highly significant, it can be concluded that positive perceptions of growth opportunities are significantly associated with higher mental well-being among women working remotely in the IT sector. Thus, Hypothesis H_{013} is Rejected.

H₀₁₄: There is no significant relationship between the clarity of managerial communication and mental well-being.

Test Conducted

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between stress caused by a lack of clear communication from managers and mental well-being scores among women working remotely in the IT sector.

Formula Used

$$r = \frac{\sum ((x - \bar{x}) (y - \bar{y}))}{(n-1) s_x s_y}$$

Explanation

Pearson correlation measures the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two continuous variables. A negative correlation would suggest that higher stress due to poor communication is associated with lower mental well-being.

Substituted Values

Metric	Value
Correlation Coefficient (r)	-0.271
p-value	0.001
Sample Size (n)	158

Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Lack of Communication Stressor	0.165	0.372	158
Mental Well-being Score	3.456	0.811	158

Interpretation Plot

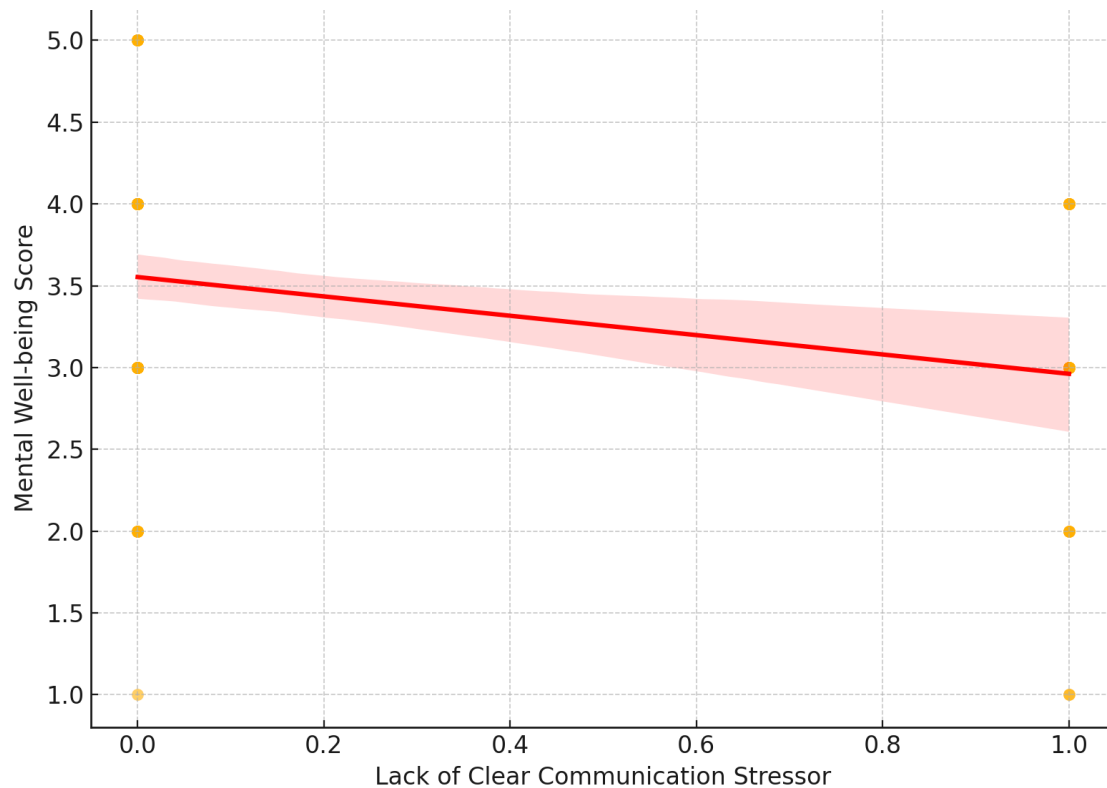


Figure 4.19 Relationship between Lack of Manager Communication and Mental Well-being

(Source: created by the author)

Inference Drawn

The Pearson correlation coefficient was found to be $r = -0.271$ with a p-value of 0.001. Since the p-value is highly significant, it can be concluded that greater stress arising from a lack of clear communication from managers is significantly associated with lower mental well-being among women working remotely in the IT sector. Thus, Hypothesis H_{014} is Rejected.

H₀₁₅: There is no significant relationship between perceived career progression in the current work setting and mental well-being among women.

Test Conducted

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between perceived career progression opportunities in the current work setting and mental well-being among women working in the IT sector.

Formula Used

$$r = \frac{\sum ((x - \bar{x}) (y - \bar{y}))}{(n-1) s_x s_y}$$

Substituted Values

Metric	Value
Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.246
p-value	0.002
Sample Size (n)	158

Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sample Size (N)
Career Progression Score	3.85	1.18	158
Mental Well-being Score	3.46	0.81	158

Interpretation of Scatter Plot

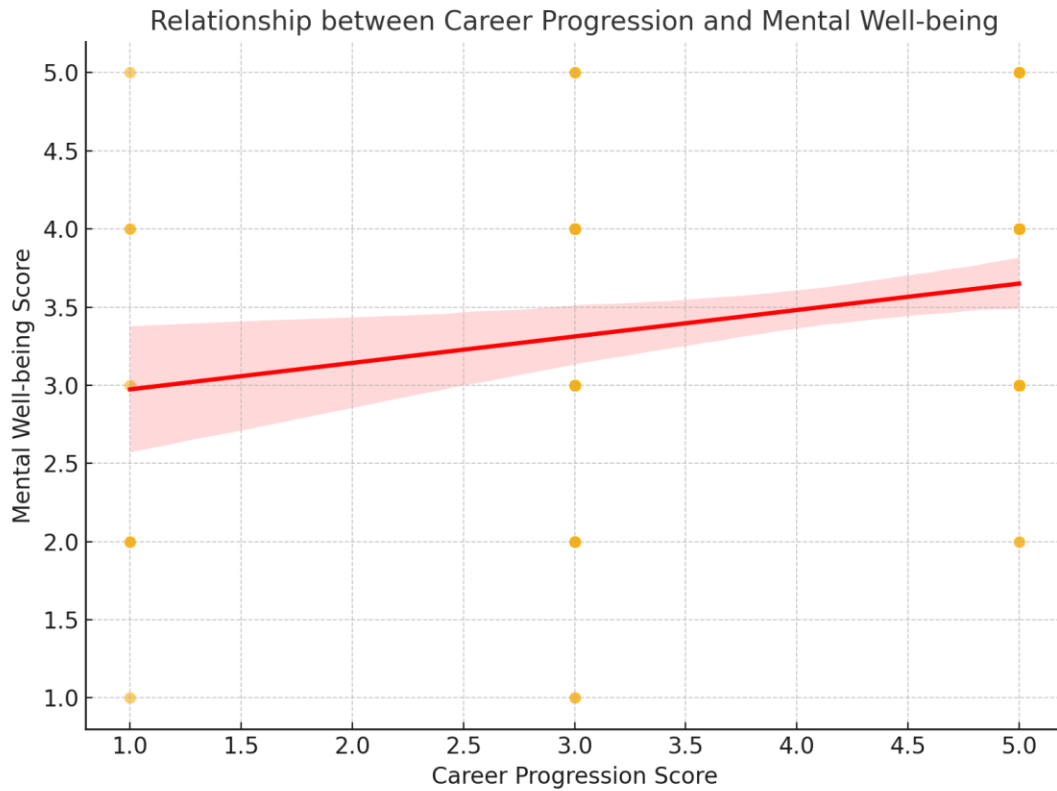


Figure 4.20: Relationship between Career Progression and Mental Well-being (*Source: created by the author*)

Inference Drawn

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.246$) between perceived career progression opportunities in the current work setting and mental well-being, with the relationship being statistically significant ($p = 0.002$). This implies that women who believe their work setting offers better career progression opportunities also tend to report higher levels of mental well-being. Therefore, Hypothesis H_{015} is rejected, highlighting the psychological benefits associated with perceived career growth in the current work environments within the Indian IT sector.

Hypothesis	Statement	Test Used	Test Statistic	Conclusion
H ₀₁₂	There is no significant correlation between satisfaction with organisational policies and mental well-being.	Correlation	$r = 0.497$, $p < 0.001$	Rejected
H ₀₁₃	There is no significant relation between perceptions of growth opportunities and mental well-being.	Correlation	$r = 0.431$, $p < 0.001$	Rejected
H ₀₁₄	There is no significant relationship between the clarity of managerial communication and mental well-being.	Correlation	$r = -0.271$, $p = 0.001$	Rejected
H ₀₁₅	There is no significant relationship between perceived career progression in the current work setup and mental well-being among women.	Correlation	$r = 0.246$, $p = 0.002$	Rejected

4.2.10. Key Interpretation of Phase II Quantitative Analysis

i. Stressors and Their Impact

- Health-related stress was the most reported stressor (32% of respondents).
- Work-life imbalance (28%), overwork (25%), and isolation (19%) were also significant stressors.
- Lack of clear communication from managers resulted in the lowest average mental well-being score (2.96).

- Employees with no stressors had the highest mental well-being score (3.97).

ii. Effect of Work Setting

- No statistically significant difference in stress levels between remote, hybrid, or onsite workers (H_{01} accepted).
- However, remote workers reported higher isolation, which was statistically significant (H_{08} rejected).
- Work-life imbalance was not significantly different across settings (H_{09} accepted).

iii. Impact of Caregiving Responsibilities

- Caregivers (especially mothers) reported significantly higher stress compared to non-caregivers (H_{02} and H_{07} rejected).
- The interaction effect between work setting and caregiving was not significant, but remote caregivers showed the highest stress trends (H_{03} accepted).

iv. Biological Life Stages (3Ms)

- Menstruation symptoms negatively impacted work satisfaction (H_{04} rejected).
- Menopause symptoms showed no significant correlation with work-related stress or mental well-being (H_{05} and H_{06} accepted).

v. Organisational Policies & Support

- Higher satisfaction with organisational policies strongly correlated with better mental well-being (H_{012} rejected).

- Women's supportive policies also showed a positive impact on well-being (H_{010} rejected).
- However, there was no significant link between lack of such policies and stress levels (H_{011} accepted).

vi. Career Growth and Communication

- Perceived growth opportunities and career visibility correlated positively with mental well-being (H_{013} and H_{015} rejected).
- Lack of clear managerial communication significantly decreased mental well-being (H_{014} rejected).

vii. Coping Strategies

Most common strategies used:

- Taking breaks/time off (61%)
- Exercise/physical activity (51%)
- Time management (50%)
- Only 11% sought professional mental health support, indicating stigma or lack of access.

4.3. Key Interpretation and Findings of Phase I and Phase II Experiments

4.3.1. Key Interpretation of Phase I qualitative analysis

The study explored the mental well-being and professional challenges faced by remote-working females in the IT sector in India. The findings revealed that while remote work offers flexibility, it also introduces significant stressors, especially for women balancing professional duties with caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, the study found that organisational support was inconsistent, with some women receiving flexible hours or caregiving support, while others felt overlooked. There was a clear need for more gender-sensitive policies at three life stages, including provisions for menstrual and menopause-related health and caregiving leave. Women expressed a desire for more empathetic leadership and an inclusive work culture, with regular check-ins and mental health resources.

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes
1. Remote Work Stressors	Work-life imbalance	1. Always working
		2. No real boundary between work and home.
		3. Difficulty in multitasking
	Isolation from colleagues	1. Miss casual interactions, informal chats,
		2. Robotic vibes in video calls.
		3. Miss motivation from co-workers
		4. Miss team affiliation
		5. Miss bonding opportunities through office events.
	Health-related stress (fatigue, exhaustion)	1. Eyes hurt working all day with no breaks
		2. Feel exhausted all the time.

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes
	Overwork and long working hours	3. Physically worn out due to back pain and headaches.
		1. Always-on culture
		2. Lack of work-time boundaries
	Lack of support for family responsibilities	3. Misconception of remote work flexibility
		1. Disruption due to childcare responsibilities
		2. Role strain and juggling multiple demands
		3. Absence of external or domestic help
2. Impact of Motherhood on Remote Work	Performance affected due to motherhood	1. Need to prove professional worth
		2. Inability to focus due to childcare
		3. Concurrent demands from children and work
		4. Emotional distractions impacting deadlines
	Stress due to caregiving responsibilities	1. Emotional strain from role conflict
		2. Guilt from divided attention
		3. Emotional disappointment from child neglect
		4. Overall overwhelm and stress
	Lack of organisational support for mothers	1. Lack of empathy from leadership
		2. Inconsistent implementation of flexibility
		3. Inadequate Maternity and Postnatal Support
	Flexible work policies	1. Acknowledgement of caregiving and burnout needs
		2. Positive impact of flexibility on work-life balance

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes
		3. Recognition of motherhood needs
		4. Request for stage-specific flexibility
		5. Comprehensive flexibility for women's health needs
		6. Inclusive flexibility across conditions
		7. General demand for greater flexibility
3. Menstruation & Workplace Challenges	Menstruation affecting work performance	1. Efforts to adjust workload around cycle
		2. Physical discomfort hindering productivity
		3. Fatigue leading to absenteeism
		4. Multiple symptoms affecting concentration and output
	Comfort Level in discussing menstruation at Work	1. Stigma and silence around menstruation
		2. Need for normalisation and awareness
		3. Discomfort discussing with male managers
		4. Call for open dialogue and policies
		5. Positive managerial support (male)
		6. Positive managerial support (female)
	Lack of policies supporting menstrual health	1. Exclusion of menstrual health in wellness programs
		2. Need for menstrual leave
		3. Request for earned leave for 3M factors (Menstruation, Maternity, Menopause)

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes
		4. Absence of specific policies
4. Menopause & Its Impact on Work	Symptoms affecting productivity	1. Overwhelmed by symptoms at work
		2. Sleep disturbance impacting focus
		3. Reduced work motivation and energy
	Menopausal stress and mental well-being	1. Unpredictability and emotional disturbance
		2. Sleep issues and cognitive strain
		3. Anxiety triggered by inability to focus
		4. Use of personal coping strategies
	No workplace policies for menopause	1. Policy gap for menopausal support
		2. Need for menopause-specific counselling
		3. Lack of awareness and education
		4. Call for menopause-inclusive flexibility and facilities
5. Mental Well-Being & Stress Management	Work anxiety and emotional burnout	1. Mental exhaustion from always being available
		2. Stress from lack of breaks
		3. Isolation from remote work
		4. Emotional conflict between roles
		5. Perception of endless workload
	Coping strategies for workplace stress	1. Physical and mindfulness practices
		2. Time management and routine breaks
		3. Managerial communication

Main Theme	Subtheme	Codes
6. Organisational Policies & Support	Effectiveness of current policies and expectations	1. Need for flexibility and family support
		2. Demand for menstrual leave
		3. Desire for mental health services
		4. Inclusivity in policy design
		5. Health and hygiene awareness sessions
		6. 3M policy advocacy
7. Career Growth and Workplace Engagement	Limited career progression due to remote work	1. Exclusion from leadership roles
		2. Unequal access to training
		3. Bias in visibility and recognition
		4. Compensation inequity
	Limited access to mentorship and training	1. Exclusion from development programs
		2. Unequal managerial support
		3. Loss of informal mentorship
8. Support Expectations	Mental and physical health support programs	1. Empathetic leadership and emotional support
		2. Well-being services
		3. Supportive family-friendly policies
	Encouraging workplace conversation	1. Inclusive policy making
		2. Physical interaction for connection
		3. Supportive Management Engagement
		4. Health Awareness and Openness

4.3.2. Key Interpretation of Phase II Quantitative Analysis

The Phase II quantitative analysis identified the key stressors affecting the mental well-being of women working remotely in the Indian IT sector, such as health issues, work-life imbalance, overwork, and isolation. In the life stage of motherhood with caregiving duties significantly increase the stress, while remote working women face higher isolation, although overall stress levels do not differ by work setting. The menstrual symptoms lower the job satisfaction, but menopause symptoms show no statistical impact on stress or well-being. Gender-supportive, strong organisational policies were directly linked to better mental well-being. Career growth and clear managerial communication were linked to boosting mental health. Despite women using different coping strategies, there was a lack of professional mental health support, leading to a requirement for better awareness and access. The key findings highlighted the importance of inclusive company policies, caregiver support, and proper communication training for managers in promoting mental well-being.

Hyp. No.	Theme	Hypothesis Statement	Test Used	Result	Relevance to Mental Well-Being
H ₀₁	Work Setting	No impact of work setting on stress	One-Way ANOVA	Accepted	Stress levels are similar across remote, hybrid, and onsite roles. Remote shows slightly higher stress, but not significant. Work setting alone isn't a determinant.

Hyp. No.	Theme	Hypothesis Statement	Test Used	Result	Relevance to Mental Well-Being
H ₀₂	Caregiving	No impact of caregiving on stress	t-Test	Rejected	Caregiving significantly increases stress. This is a core contributor to poor mental well-being in mothers.
H ₀₃	Interaction: Work Setting × Caregiving	No interaction effect on stress	Two-Way ANOVA	Accepted	Interaction isn't statistically significant, but remote caregivers show the highest stress visually. Indicates a latent effect requiring deeper study.
H ₀₄	Menstruation	No relation between symptom severity & work setting satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	Rejected	Women with severe symptoms are less satisfied with their work setting. Highlights the need for menstrual policy interventions.
H ₀₅	Menopause	No relation between symptoms &	Pearson Correlation	Accepted	Menopausal symptoms do not significantly influence reported workplace stress.

Hyp. No.	Theme	Hypothesis Statement	Test Used	Result	Relevance to Mental Well-Being
		workplace stress			Other variables may moderate this relationship.
H ₀₆	Menopause	No relation between symptoms & mental well-being	Pearson Correlation	Accepted	No strong correlation was found, though qualitative data indicates discomfort. Need for further support policies.
H ₀₇	Motherhood	No difference in caregiving stress between mothers and non-mothers	One-Way ANOVA	Rejected	Mothers report significantly higher caregiving stress. Clear indicator for maternity/caregiving support needs.
H ₀₈	Remote Work Isolation	No difference in isolation across work settings	One-Way ANOVA	Rejected	Remote workers experience significantly higher isolation, impacting their emotional well-being. Suggestions for virtual team bonding.
H ₀₉	Work-Life Balance	No difference in work-life	One-Way ANOVA	Accepted	Work-life imbalance is present across all settings, not unique to remote work.

Hyp. No.	Theme	Hypothesis Statement	Test Used	Result	Relevance to Mental Well-Being
		balance across work settings			
H ₀₁₀	Gender-Supportive Policies	No relation to mental well-being	Pearson Correlation	Rejected	Strong positive relationship. Gender-supportive policies improve mental well-being.
H ₀₁₁	Gender Policy & Stress	No correlation between lack of gender policies & stress	Pearson Correlation	Accepted	While not statistically significant, qualitative responses show emotional frustration. Indicates policy expectations.
H ₀₁₂	Org. Policies & Mental Health	No correlation between satisfaction with the organisation. policies & mental well-being	Pearson Correlation	Rejected	Very strong correlation. Satisfaction with HR policies directly improves mental health.

Hyp. No.	Theme	Hypothesis Statement	Test Used	Result	Relevance to Mental Well-Being
H ₀₁₃	Career Growth	No relation between growth opportunities & mental well-being	Pearson Correlation	Rejected	Growth perception significantly improves mental health. Stalled career paths harm morale.
H ₀₁₄	Manager Communication	No relation between communication clarity & mental well-being	Pearson Correlation	Rejected	Poor communication negatively affects mental well-being. Highlights the manager training needs.
H ₀₁₅	Career Progression in the current work setting	No relation between perceived growth in the current setup & mental well-being	Pearson Correlation	Rejected	Career visibility boosts mental well-being. Signals the importance of fair recognition systems.

4.4. Overall Summary of Results

The findings indicate that the mental well-being of remotely working women in the Indian IT sector is influenced by personal responsibilities, workplace conditions, and organisational support. While the work setting itself (remote, hybrid, or onsite) had a minor impact on stress levels, caregiving responsibilities, especially motherhood, significantly increased the stress. Key stressors included caregiving pressure, isolation from colleagues, poor work-life balance, overwork, and inadequate communication from managers, and poor communication had the most negative effects. Menstruation impacted job satisfaction, while menopause had no major effects statistically.

Organisational support, such as flexible work hours and gender-supportive policies, correlated positively with better mental well-being. However, communication gaps and perceived support still exist, highlighting the need for more inclusive workplace policies. The study emphasises that to effectively support women's mental health in remote areas, organisations must address caregiving challenges and structural obstacles to career development. The analysis reveals that supportive policies, empathetic leadership and effective communication are crucial in mitigating stress and enhancing the mental well-being of female employees working remotely. It has revealed that there is a need for better mental health resources and inclusive policies, even if women are using coping strategies to reduce mental stress.

CHAPTER V:

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the study's key findings about the research questions presented in Chapter I. It incorporates both the quantitative results and qualitative themes derived from Chapter IV. Each section integrates existing literature, relevance to the conceptual framework, and empirical insights, aligning with the research objectives.

5.1. Discussion on the key stressors that remote-working women face in the Indian IT sector

i. The Illusion of Flexibility – ‘When Remote Work Becomes Boundaryless ’

The majority of Indian women working in IT who are working remotely have to juggle between work and family. The flexibility in remote work often becomes boundaryless with extended working hours at home. It creates an illusion of flexible working but ends up working continuously around the clock, keeping available 24/7, leading to stress and burnout. This finding supports Chung et al. (2020), who observed that flexibility without operational limits leads to longer work hours and mental fatigue. Similarly, Kniffin et al. (2021) observed that boundary erosion is often an unintended consequence of remote work. Furthermore, Oakman et al. (2020) found that women experience more stress when remote working lacks clear start and stop times.

ii. Isolation in the Digital Workplace: Psychological and Social Impacts

Women face emotional and social disconnection from their teams being working from home. Casual interactions are absent, and informal support networks exacerbate feelings of loneliness. Women feel left out many times in various employee engagement activities or mentorship programs, and training held in the office, which creates a feeling of being

undervalued, ultimately increases the stress. There is inadequate communication with the manager or supervisor, resulting in an increased feeling of isolation, which can lead to stress. This aligns with the study conducted by Oakman et al. (2020), who observed that remote-working women in Australia faced similar issues where isolation was found to be reducing engagement and increasing psychological strain.

iii. The Hidden Costs of Overwork in Home-Based Settings:

Women in India face additional household responsibilities alongside professional expectations, resulting in physical and emotional fatigue and health-related stress, which often results in work-life imbalance. They need to manage both duties as top priorities, resulting in overwork without taking breaks. Park and Lee (2024) observed that when remote work combines with caregiving duties, cumulative role overloads significantly impact mental well-being.

5.2. Discussion on life stages, motherhood, menstruation, menopause and their effect on mental well-being and productivity

i. Interrupted Productivity: The Dual Burden of Caregiving and Career

Mothers working remotely faced challenges of continuously managing household, caregiving, and work responsibilities, with interrupted work schedules due to unavoidable immediate attention required by their kids and heightened stress. This aligned with the study done by Madgavkar et al. (2021), where remote working mothers globally faced similar challenges during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to reduced productivity and increased attrition in the company.

ii. Organisational Apathy: Gaps in Maternity and Parenting Support

Organisations offer maternity leave but do not understand the need for more support after resuming work. Women need more flexibility and support when they return to work, along with an empathetic leader to understand the unavoidable circumstances when working remotely. Similarly, Costantini et al. (2020) found that structured post-maternity policies are still rare and directly impact the reintegration experience of returning mothers.

iii. Flexibility vs. Availability: The Need for Empathetic Implementation

Working remotely can mean getting flexibility to work, but it doesn't mean being available all the time. Women experienced that flexible policies resulted in expectations of constant availability by their managers and team members. It is important to be empathetic towards remote workers, such that others understand when you are not available at your desk in the office for personal work and duties. This will reduce the stress level of being available all the time. This aligns with the study by Yucel and Fan (2023), who emphasise that flexibility, if backed by empathetic leadership or management in the organisation, can be more effective.

iv. Menstruation and Performance: When Biology Meets Taboo

The majority of women faced challenges in concentrating on work, and their performance fluctuated during their menstrual cycles, but the topic was either ignored or taboo in their workplace cultures. Women are uncomfortable discussing their menstrual health due to a lack of empathy. They silently face the multiple symptoms that impact their physical and emotional discomfort. Schoep et al. (2019) found similar evidence where women reported productivity loss due to menstrual symptoms, and Sawamoto et al. (2025) mentioned that women significantly reduce their performance if they work during the underreported menstrual discomfort due to stigma around it and a lack of organisational response.

v. Menopause in the Margins: Symptoms, Stress, and the Policy Void

Menopause and related policy were largely unrecognised by many organisations. Women navigate significant symptoms in silence, which results in productivity challenges. Women often face random symptoms related to perimenopause and menopause, which affect their work performance, adding to the stress level that they manage on their own using coping strategies. Organisations usually do not give importance to this and implement any such policy that can support women in the menopausal life stage. This aligns with the study done by Atkinson, Carmichael and Duberley (2024) that most employers lacked formal menopause-related support, and menopausal symptoms were negatively correlated with job satisfaction.

vi. Health at Work: Unspoken Needs, Unrealised Policies

Women shared that symptoms and their resulting stress are often self-managed using coping techniques due to a lack of understanding or structured support at the workplace. Supportive structures and policies are absent for menstruation and menopause life stages, which show organisational blind spots around women's health. This aligns with the study by Reuschke and Felstead (2020), who emphasised that gender-inclusive wellness policies are crucial for retaining female talent in remote and hybrid settings.

5.3. Discussion on how remote work exacerbates these life-stage stressors

i. Burnout Without Boundaries: Emotional Toll of Remote Expectations

Remote working women face difficulty in differentiating time for work, caregiving, and recovery. The home was transformed into a multipurpose space with blurred boundaries, particularly for mothers, where caregiving interruptions were constant. Menstruation-related

fatigue, cramps or menopause-induced sleep disturbances, anxiety further impacted the job performance, without the flexibility or rest provisions to accommodate them. Emotional and physical exhaustion due to constant availability and a lack of workplace structure and empathetic leadership make it difficult to perform. These finding aligns with the study by Ipsen et al. (2021), who emphasised that remote working women with caregiving duties experienced a greater rise in emotional exhaustion during the pandemic than male caregivers. Whereas Kniffin et al. (2021) shared that such burnout stems from poor remote management frameworks and a lack of structured idle time to relax and bounce back.

ii. Coping Strategies: Self-Management Over Systemic Solutions

The lack of organisational support led women to adopt individual coping strategies, which include physical activities, meditation, taking breaks, time management and discussing with their manager while still working while unwell. While working remotely, it is often considered that women get flexibility and time to relax or can take a break whenever they want, but the irony is that women often forget to take a break and prioritise their situation and health, which worsens their stress level and mental well-being. The organisation fails to address these challenges by implementing tailored policies. Similarly, Oakman et al. (2020) mentioned that self-regulation is the default coping mechanism when mental health support structures are absent or stigmatised in the organisation.

A study done by Shishodia (2023) found that self-care routines like relaxation techniques, scheduled micro-breaks, and mindful boundary-setting are reliably linked to lower stress and improved work satisfaction. Organisations that promote self-care through policies and wellness programs further support these benefits. As per the study done by Chandrasekaran (2025), women often face higher stress levels due to involvement in multiple roles, making

it a need for them to adopt effective stress management coping strategies such as relaxation techniques, work-life balance practices, and a focus on overall well-being, to prevent them from burning out and maintain productivity. Organisations must adopt supportive, inclusive, and low-stress environments that allow women to prioritise their mental and physical health, thus enhancing motivation, engagement, and long-term professional growth.

iii. The Role of Empathetic Leadership in Mental Health Outcomes

Women emphasised the need for supportive supervisors and empathetic leaders who acknowledge mental health concerns at the life stages. Women who don't have empathetic supervisors often face challenges in managing their work, which increases their stress level, and their mental health goes for a toss. This aligns with the study by Hammer et al. (2024), who mentioned that supervisors trained for supportive and empathetic behaviour reduce the stigma and improve employee mental health.

A study done by Muss et al. (2024) emphasised that empathetic leaders influence mental well-being, workplace attitudes, interpersonal relationships, perceptions of fairness, and overall performance positively. Direct reports and teams benefit through increased psychological connection and engagement by the leaders.

5.4. Discussion on current HR policies and practices in India's IT sector to address gender-specific challenges and support women's mental well-being in remote work environments.

i. One Size Doesn't Fit All: The Need for Inclusive HR Policies

Women highlighted that existing policies often failed to reflect the complex realities of female remote workers in different life stages. Maternity policy is in place, but it doesn't

align with their needs postpartum. No dedicated menstrual and menopausal leave that supports the mental and physical burnout. This aligns with the study by CIPD (2023), which emphasises that policies must be tailored to life-stage needs to be meaningful, which brings unique mental, physical, and domestic support requirements. Current HR frameworks manage to relate to uniform policy patterns rather than responsive accommodations based on life stages or needs. As a result, women in menstruation, motherhood, or menopause are underserved by the actual policies that claim inclusivity in the workplace.

ii. Gender-Sensitive Interventions: From Menstrual Leave to Career Mentorship

Women suggested menstrual leave, phased returns post-maternity, mentorship pods, and mental health support to be implemented as the existing policies don't align with remote working challenges. These are aligned with the recent global studies (Ius Laboris, 2023) which emphasise the importance of gender-sensitive and life stage responsive workplace policies, such as Spain's menstrual leave policy law (Solymosi-Szekeres, 2025) legitimises the reproductive health of women at work. Ensher et al. (2022) encourage remote mentorship to support remote workers. Collectively, such initiatives demonstrate how inclusive, well-designed policies can enhance equity and well-being in modern workplaces for women.

iii. Communication as a Policy Tool: Managerial Clarity and Psychological Safety

The unclear communication from the manager or supervisor about entitlements or job expectations caused uncertainty, which became a major source of stress. It created uncertainty due to a lack of clear communication from managers and emerged as a significant stressor. Clear communication helps in setting clear objectives and clear boundaries, which help in managing remote work stressors and challenges faced by women in their three life

stages. The study revealed that poor communication from the manager negatively affects mental well-being, which highlights the manager's training needs. As per Liao, Li and Huang (2024), when communication is unclear, psychological safety declines and increases policy ineffectiveness. Similarly, Parker, Knight and Keller (2020) mentioned that regular, structured check-ins between managers and employees can help in reducing stress and could prevent the feeling of disengagement, especially in remote and hybrid teams.

iv. Stalled Trajectories: Remote and the Leadership Ceiling

There is a lack of career visibility while being away from the office. Women often get ignored when it comes to promotions in spite of their performance. There is no clear growth path provided by their managers. Similar results were identified by Choudhury et al. (2021) that remote workers often receive fewer high-visibility projects and fewer opportunities for development and growth.

v. Performance Perceptions and Proximity Bias

Women perceived that in-person colleagues were seen as more committed compared to remote workers. Despite working around the clock, ignoring family and self needs, managers often appreciate the peers working from the office or onsite, which demotivates women who are good at work, even if they are working remotely. Similarly, Choudhury et al. (2021) found that proximity bias still influences performance evaluations in teams working in different settings.

vi. Missing Mentorship: Skill Development in a Disconnected Workplace

There is a lack of access to informal mentorship and upskilling opportunities in a remote work setting. Women got ignored in office trainings and mentorship by leadership while working remotely. Virtual mentoring improves engagement and reduces isolation for remote women employees. Similarly, Ensher et al. (2022) found that mentoring is important in a remote work setting to feel unbiased.

5.5. Discussion on inclusive growth and equity policies that can be implemented to improve mental well-being, workplace engagement, and career satisfaction of women in India's IT sector.

i. Participant Voices: A Blueprint for Better Workplaces

Women recommended structured flexibility, protected downtime, and integrated well-being policies. This will create a more inclusive growth for women working remotely. These align with the findings of Bhoir and Sinha (2024) that life-stage-responsive HR practices, including flexible scheduling and targeted well-being support, significantly enhance mental health results and employee retention.

ii. Mental Health and Gender: Recommendations Grounded in Reality

In this fast-paced environment where women are juggling between home and work, it is extremely important to focus on self-care. In India, where women are expected to focus on their families and household, working women have to prioritise both ignoring their stress level and their mental wellbeing. Women are in high need of unbiased and non-judgmental mental health counselling to be heard and understood. Women called for embedded mental health programs similar to Ernawati et al. (2022), who found that workplace wellness

programs dedicated to working mothers significantly improve psychological well-being and contribute to higher retention and job satisfaction.

iii. Toward a Gender-Inclusive Remote Work Culture

Virtual workplaces require acknowledging gendered realities and designing policies that reflect them. There is a high need to encourage the expression of women's health issues. Organisations may create forums and other support platforms to discuss, counsel, and create awareness related to the challenges faced during the three life stages of women. This aligns with the study by Madgavkar et al. (2020), which mentioned that equity-first workplace models can help close gender gaps, encourage well-being and provide growth opportunities.

CHAPTER VI:

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Summary of the Study

This doctoral research studied the factors affecting the mental well-being of remote-working women in the Indian IT sector. It has explored how women navigate stressors such as work-life imbalance, professional isolation, caregiving responsibilities, and biological changes, including menstruation, motherhood, and menopause. These life-stage realities were found to be unsupported by the existing organisational structures, which led to significant emotional stress, disconnection, and feelings of exclusion.

The findings of the study revealed that many organisational policies failed to address the needs of women working in remote settings. It highlighted emotional burnout, exhaustion, and a lack of official empathy. Participants stated the need for empathetic leadership, flexible work arrangements, and gender-sensitive support systems. However, global studies have shown the effectiveness of inclusive practices such as menstrual leave, parental flexibility, and virtual mentorship. These examples confirmed that equity-driven methods can support the well-being and career growth of women in an improved way.

The study concluded that general HR frameworks are inadequate for supporting diverse female experiences. A more personalised and inclusive policy design is necessary to ensure psychological well-being, engagement, and professional development amongst women in the digital workplaces.

6.2. Implications of the Study

6.2.1. Theoretical Implications: This research enhances the understanding of work-life balance by integrating gender-life stages and workplace mental health. It enhances the discussions

on occupational stress by highlighting the significance of recognising biological and caregiving stressors in a remote work setting.

6.2.2. Practical Implications for Organisations:

- i. Policy Reforms: There is an imperative need for organisations to progress on gender-inclusive HR policies addressing menstruation, motherhood, and menopause related challenges.
- ii. Flexible Work Design: Remote and hybrid models should be implemented with personalised flexibility, as it is important to achieve a strong balance between availability and autonomy to ensure optimal performance and employee satisfaction.
- iii. Leadership Sensitisation: Managers should be trained in gender sensitivity and emotional intelligence to promote inclusive team cultures and minimise unconscious bias.
- iv. Inclusive Infrastructure: Investment in accessible, inclusive technology and digital tools such as AI chatbots, open forums, and virtual coffee meetings can reduce isolation and enhance engagement among women working remotely.

6.2.3. Societal Implications:

- i. Fostering a national conversation on the integration of gender and life-stage issues into workplace design can help fight stigma.
- ii. Collaborative initiatives between government, industry, and civil society can promote and drive structural change and establish supportive practices as a standard.

6.2.4. Policy Implications: Insights from the study can guide in reforming of labour policy to include life-stage-sensitive provisions such as reproductive health support, caregiving leave, and remote work entitlements, particularly for the IT sector.

6.3. Recommendations for Future Research

- i. Sectoral Expansion: Investigation can be explored for similar gendered challenges in other industries like manufacturing, healthcare, education, or finance. Similarly wider geographical span of sampling could be used to validate the findings of the study.
- ii. Longitudinal Inquiry: Explore the transformative impact of supportive policies on well-being and career outcomes over time compared to the effects of unsupportive policies.
- iii. Intersectional Analysis: Examine the remote work experiences for women with other identities, such as caste, class, marital status, or geography.
- iv. Multi-perspective Insights: Include the standpoints of male colleagues and leadership to promote greater inclusivity and shared responsibility in the implementation of policies.
- v. Technology and Mental Health: Evaluate how AI and digital tools can monitor well-being and provide timely mental health support in distributed teams.
- vi. Scope Enhancement: This study is limited by scope and nature of the present work environment of the current IT industry; however, with the advent of AI integration in the IT sector, the nature of work and the kind of AI support will change or partly influence the stressors. This study could be replicated and done again in future time and space, where the work dynamics can completely change.

6.4. Conclusion

The research confirms that remote work environments providing flexibility can intensify gender-specific stressors when there is a lack of organisational support. Women who manage caregiving and biological accountabilities require tailor-made policies and empathetic leadership to ensure both well-being and career progression. The transition from a generic HR approach to a gender-

sensitive, life-stage-responsive framework that enables equity, psychological safety, and professional growth for women in virtual workplaces is a must in the Indian IT sector.

6.5. Personal Reflection

Embarking on this research journey has been a transformative experience, both professionally and personally. When I first conceived the idea of exploring the mental well-being of remote working women in the Indian IT sector, I was driven by the observations I made as a working professional and as a woman navigating similar work-life boundaries. However, as the study progressed, I came to realise that the challenges faced by women in remote settings go far beyond logistical inconvenience. They are deeply structural, emotional, and often invisible.

Through my interactions with women across different life stages—many of whom spoke with raw honesty about their struggles with caregiving, menstruation, menopause, and professional isolation—I began to understand the layered nature of workplace stress. Their stories were not just data points; they were powerful expressions of resilience and quiet endurance. Listening to their voices helped me shift my perspective from sympathy to empathy and from observation to advocacy.

Academically, the research strengthened my analytical skills and taught me the importance of integrating qualitative sensitivity with quantitative rigour. More importantly, it deepened my awareness of how gendered experiences are often overlooked in policy conversations, especially in high-pressure industries like IT. I also learned that the mere presence of policies does not ensure inclusion—it is the culture of empathy, leadership behaviours, and open dialogue that truly shapes outcomes.

On a personal level, this study made me more aware of my own mental health and work-life balance. It encouraged me to prioritise self-care without guilt and to speak more openly about women's health issues in professional spaces—topics often considered taboo or trivial.

This doctoral work has not just enriched my academic understanding but has also inspired a more purposeful commitment to championing gender equity and psychological safety in workplaces. I hope that through this thesis, I have contributed meaningfully to a conversation that must continue—one that values not just productivity, but humanity.

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APPENDIX A:
SURVEY COVER LETTER

Subject: Invitation to Participate in Survey on Mental Well-Being of Women in the IT Sector

Dear [Recipient's Name],

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Rimzim Fuladi, and I am a Senior Manager TA at MSys Technologies. We are surveying to understand the mental well-being, workplace engagement, and overall career satisfaction of women working in the Indian IT sector. Your participation in this survey is crucial as it will provide valuable insights into the challenges and stressors faced by women in different work settings, including remote, hybrid, and full-time office environments.

Purpose of the Survey: The primary objective of this survey is to gather data on the mental well-being and productivity of women in the IT sector, particularly during key life stages such as motherhood, menstruation, and menopause. The findings from this survey helped us identify the most effective policies and practices to support women's mental well-being and career satisfaction.

Why Your Participation Matters: Your experiences and insights are invaluable to us. By participating in this survey, you are contributing to a better understanding of the unique challenges faced by women in the IT industry. Your responses helped shape future policies and practices that promote a supportive and inclusive work environment for women.

Confidentiality: Please be assured that all responses will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. The survey is anonymous, and no personally identifiable information was collected.

How to Participate: The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. You can access it through the following link: <https://forms.gle/5r4nF8CWjfWZhWtw9>. We kindly request that you complete the survey by 15 January 2025.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me at Rimzim.fuladi@gmail.com or 7987755798.

Thank you for your time and participation. Your input is greatly appreciated and has made a significant impact on improving the mental well-being and career satisfaction of women in the IT sector.

Sincerely,

Rimzim Fuladi

Sr. Manager TA

Aziro Technologies

APPENDIX B:
INFORMED CONSENT



Interview Consent Form

Research project title: Factors Affecting Mental Well-being of Remote Working Females in an Indian IT Company

Research investigator: Rimzim Fuladi

Research Participant's name:

The interview will take 15 minutes. We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- The interview will be recorded, and a transcript will be produced

- You will be sent the transcript and allowed to correct any factual errors
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed by Rimzim Fuladi as research investigator
- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to Rimzim Fuladi and academic colleagues and researchers with whom he might collaborate as part of the research process
- Any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymised so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify you is not revealed
- The actual recording will be kept in the records
- Any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval

Participants Signature

Date

Researchers Signature

Date

Contact Information

This research has been reviewed and approved by SSBM. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Name of researcher: Rimzim Fuladi E-mail: Rimzim.fuladi@gmail.com

You can also contact Rimzim Fuladi's supervisor:

Name of supervisor: Dr. Rumiya Agashe E-mail: rumiya@ssbm.ch

What if I have concerns about this research?

If you are worried about this research or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can contact SSBM by email at contact@ssbm.ch.

APPENDIX C:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section 1: Demographic and Background Information

Can you share your professional background, including your role in the IT sector, your remote work experience, and how you manage your work alongside any caregiving responsibilities you may have?

Section 2: Remote Work Stressors

How has remote work affected your work-life balance, and what kinds of stressors have you experienced, especially those related to personal health or family responsibilities, compared to a traditional office setting?

Section 3: Impact of Motherhood on Work

As a mother working remotely, how do you manage the dual responsibilities of childcare and professional duties, and what forms of support (if any) has your organisation provided to help you maintain productivity and mental well-being?

Section 4: Menstruation and Workplace Challenges

How do menstruation-related challenges impact your work performance in a remote setting, and how comfortable do you feel discussing these issues with colleagues or supervisors, given current organisational practices or support systems?

Section 5: Menopause and Its Impact on Work

If you are experiencing menopause or perimenopause, how do you manage its symptoms while working remotely, and do you feel your organisation acknowledges and supports the unique needs of women during this stage?

Section 6: Mental Well-Being and Stress Management

How do you manage stress and maintain mental well-being while working remotely, and what impact has this work setup had on your sense of connection, professional relationships, and overall mental health?

Section 7: Organisational Policies and Support

How would you evaluate your organisation's efforts to support the health and well-being of women in remote roles, particularly regarding menstruation, menopause, and caregiving responsibilities, and what improvements would you recommend?

Section 8: Workplace Engagement and Career Development

In what ways has remote work influenced your professional engagement, recognition, and opportunities for career development, especially while managing personal health or caregiving responsibilities?

Section 9: Recommendations and Future Outlook

What changes would you recommend making remote work more inclusive and supportive for women in the IT sector, particularly in addressing challenges related to health, caregiving, and mental well-being, and how do you envision its future?

APPENDIX D:
SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey Questionnaire: Stressors of Remote Work and Mental Well-Being for Women in India's
IT Sector

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age:

- ☐ Below 25
- ☐ 25-30
- ☐ 31-35
- ☐ 36-40
- ☐ 41-45
- ☐ 46-50
- ☐ 51 and above

2. What is your department?

- ☐ Software Development
- ☐ IT Support
- ☐ Administration
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Human Resources
- ☐ Training and Development

☐ Sales and Business Development

☐ Marketing and Branding

☐ Other: _____

3. What is your total experience in IT?

☐ 1-3 years

☐ 4-6 years

☐ 7-10 years

☐ 10+ years

4. Current work setting:

☐ Working in Hybrid mode

☐ Working in fully remote mode

☐ Working full-time from the office

5. Do you have caregiving responsibilities (children, elderly parents, etc.)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. If yes, what are your caregiving responsibilities? (Select all that apply.)

☐ Caring for children

☐ Caring for elderly family members

☐ Other (Please specify): _____

Section 2: Stressors of Remote Work

7. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your overall experience of working remotely?

☐ 1 - Very negative

☐ 2 - Negative

☐ 3 - Neutral

☐ 4 - Positive

☐ 5 - Very positive

8. What are the most common stressors you face while working in your current work setting? (Select up to 3)

☐ Isolation from colleagues

☐ Work-life imbalance

☐ I am happy in my current work setting,/ No stressors

☐ Poor work ergonomics (e.g., uncomfortable workstation)

☐ Health-related stress (e.g., fatigue, mental exhaustion)

☐ Lack of support for family responsibilities

☐ Technological issues (e.g., internet connectivity, software problems)

☐ Lack of clear communication from managers

☐ Overwork/long work hours

☐ Other (Please specify): _____

☐ Not Applicable

9. How often do you experience stress?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Always

Section 3: Impact of Motherhood on Work

10. Do you have children under the age of 18?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11. If yes, how often do your caregiving duties interfere with your work tasks?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Always
- ☐ Not Relevant

12. On a scale of 1 to 5, how supportive is your organisation in helping you balance your work and caregiving responsibilities?

- ☐ 1 - Not supportive at all

☐ 2 - Somewhat supportive

☐ 3 - Neutral

☐ 4 - Supportive

☐ 5 - Very supportive

13. What specific workplace policies or practices have been helpful in supporting your role as a mother? (Select all that apply)

☐ Flexible working hours

☐ Maternity leave

☐ Flexibility in hybrid working days

☐ Childcare support

☐ Unpaid Leaves

☐ Work-from-home arrangements

☐ No specific support

☐ Other (Please specify): _____

☐ Not Applicable

14. Has your work performance been affected by your responsibilities as a mother?

☐ Yes, significantly affected

☐ Yes, somewhat affected

☐ No, not affected

☐ Not Applicable

Section 4: Impact of Menstruation on Work

15. How often do you experience menstruation-related symptoms that affect your work performance?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Always

16. What specific symptoms related to menstruation impact your work? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Cramps or abdominal pain
- ☐ Mood swings
- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating
- ☐ Back pain
- ☐ Other (Please specify): _____
- ☐ Not affected by menstruation

17. On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable do you feel discussing menstruation-related issues with your colleagues or supervisor?

- ☐ 1 - Not comfortable at all

☐ 2 - Slightly uncomfortable

☐ 3 - Neutral

☐ 4 - Comfortable

☐ 5 - Very comfortable

18. Do you feel that menstruation affects your career progression in any way (e.g., performance evaluations, opportunities for promotion)?

☐ Yes, significantly

☐ Yes, somewhat

☐ No, not at all

Section 5: Impact of Menopause on Work

19. Are you currently experiencing menopause or perimenopause?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not applicable

20. If yes, how often do menopause-related symptoms affect your work?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Occasionally

☐ Frequently

☐ Always

☐ Not Applicable

21. What specific symptoms related to menopause affect your work? (Select all that apply)

☐ Hot flashes

☐ Sleep disturbances

☐ Mood swings

☐ Anxiety or stress

☐ Difficulty concentrating

☐ Fatigue

☐ Other (Please specify): _____

☐ Not Applicable

22. On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable do you feel discussing menopause-related issues with your colleagues or supervisor?

☐ 1 - Not comfortable at all

☐ 2 - Slightly uncomfortable

☐ 3 - Neutral

☐ 4 - Comfortable

☐ 5 - Very comfortable

☐ Not Relevant

23. Do you feel that menopause-related issues have impacted your job satisfaction or productivity?

☐ Yes, significantly

☐ Yes, somewhat

☐ No, not at all

☐ Not Relevant

Section 6: Mental Well-Being and Stress Management

24. How would you rate your overall mental well-being while working in your current work setting?

☐ 1 - Very poor

☐ 2 - Poor

☐ 3 - Neutral

☐ 4 - Good

☐ 5 - Very good

25. On a scale of 1 to 5, how often do you experience stress due to work and personal health needs (motherhood, menstruation, menopause)?

☐ 1 - Never

☐ 2 - Rarely

☐ 3 - Occasionally

☐ 4 - Frequently

☐ 5 - Always

26. What strategies do you use to manage work-related stress? (Select all that apply.)

☐ Exercise or physical activity

☐ Meditation or mindfulness practices

☐ Time management techniques

☐ Taking breaks or time off

☐ Speaking to a supervisor or manager

☐ Seeking professional mental health support

☐ Other (Please specify): _____

☐ Not applicable as I don't experience any stressor

27. How often do you feel isolated or disconnected from your colleagues while working?

☐ Never

☐ Rarely

☐ Occasionally

☐ Frequently

☐ Always

Section 7: Organisational Support and Policies

28. How satisfied are you with your organisation's policies and support for women's health (motherhood, menstruation, menopause)?

☐ 1 - Very dissatisfied

☐ 2 - Dissatisfied

☐ 3 - Neutral

☐ 4 - Satisfied

☐ 5 - Very satisfied

29. What additional policies or support mechanisms would be most helpful in managing work-related challenges related to your health and well-being? (Select all that apply)

☐ Flexible working hours

☐ Access to mental health resources (e.g., counselling)

☐ Health-related leave policies (e.g., menstrual leave)

☐ Family support (e.g., childcare support or subsidies)

☐ Regular check-ins with managers for well-being support

☐ Current policies are helpful to manage the day to day challenges

☐ Other (Please specify): _____

Section 8: Workplace Engagement and Career Development

30. Has the current work setting positively influenced your professional engagement or participation in career development activities (e.g., promotions, skill development programs)?

☐ Yes, negatively

☐ Yes, positively

☐ No change

31. Do you believe that the current work setting has created new and exciting career progression opportunities compared to traditional full-time work from office?

☐ Better

☐ Worse

☐ No change

Final Comments and Suggestions

32. Creating a positive and inclusive workplace for women can be accomplished by fostering open discussions about motherhood, menstruation, and menopause. This approach promotes understanding and flexibility, empowering women while enhancing workplace cohesion and productivity. We encourage you to share your suggestions on how we can improve the workplace experience for those facing challenges during menstruation, motherhood, and menopause.

Survey Instructions:

- Please answer each question based on your experience as a female employee in the IT sector working remotely.
- The survey should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.
- Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for academic purposes.