International Journal on Science and Technology (IJSAT)
E-ISSN: 2229-7677 ● Website: www.ijsat.org ● Email: editor@ijsat.org

From Productivity to Exhaustion
A study on enhanced working hours in IT sectors

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Abstract

Infosys Co-Founder Mr. Narayana Murthi recently proposed an idea to the Karnataka government that is to increase the working hours from 40 to 70 hours for week of IT professional. According to him this idea boosts the productivity and India more competitive in the global market this led to the heavy debate. Exponents argue that increases in work hours could leads to enhanced faster project completion and heightened competitiveness in IT sector, censurer have raised opinion about the potential well-being including mental health, physical well-being, burnout stress and decrease in work-life balance.

They argue that enhanced working hour could leads to decline in productivity due to extreme tiredness and decrease in overall job satisfaction. This debate focuses on needs for a balanced approach to work schedules considering both productivity goals and employes well-being in the fast-evolving IT industry.

1. Introduction

Start for the Indian IT industry was given by the TCS and HCL companies in 1960s and 1970s.The key milestones included the economic liberalization of 1991, this way the opportunities opened to India for foreign investments and growth. In 1998 IT Software Development Plan (ITSDP) further improve the sector by enhancing infrastructure and policies. There was a big crisis appeared to the IT industry all over the world that was Y2K crisis at this crisis Indian IT firm helped global companies update software system, solidifying India's reputation for reliable software solutions. By the 2000's the industry had expand to offer complex IT services contributing significantly to India's economy and providing millions of jobs companies like Infosys, TCS and Wipro became global giants.IT sector was major contributor to India's GDP and employment, supporting millions directly and indirectly in

2020. At the time of COVID-19 there was a rapid change in the IT sector they focus on remote work and also raising the concerns about employee well-being. In present situation the industry facing challenges with AI, automation and cloud computing. The industry is at vital moment, balancing global competitiveness with sustainable work practice.

Types of Work Force

The workforce comprise all people employed or available for work. Classifying it helps understand labor market trends, inform HR strategies, analyze economic data, and ensure legal compliance. It's a diverse group, crucial for any economy, and its composition reveals insights into skills, demographics, and employment patterns. Here are some common classifications:

- **Full Time Employees:**
  These are regular employees who work a standard number of hours per week and receive benefits such as health insurance, paid time off, and retirement plans.
- **Part Time Employees:**
  Part-time employees work fewer hours than full-time employees and may or may not receive benefits depending on company policy.
- **Contract Works:**
  Contract workers are hired for specific projects or periods. They usually don't receive company benefits and may work for multiple clients simultaneously.
- **Freelancers:**
  Freelancers are self-employed individuals who offer their services to various companies on a project-by-project basis. They have the flexibility to choose their clients and projects.
- **Consultants:**
  Consultants are experts in a specific field who provide advice and strategies to companies. They can be hired on a short-term or long-term basis, depending on the project needs.
- **Remote Works:**
  Remote workers perform their job duties outside of the traditional office environment, often from home or other locations. They can be full-time, part-time, contract workers, or freelancers.

Literature Review

1. "The association of extended works shifts and fatigue in health care workers", Journal of occupational and environmental medicine,
   This article represents how long work hours including shifts up to 14 hours impact health care workers focusing on enhanced fatigue burnout and the risk of medical errors it suggests that shift length limitation and proper rest schedules could improve safety and employee well-being.
2. The productivity paradox: How over work fails to improve productivity – "Harvard Business".
   This article challenges the benefit that longer hours result in higher productivity in the Indian IT industry it highlights how extended shifts often lead to fatigue and burnout which can diminish productivity despite the extra time spent at work.
3. Extended working hours and employee stress in Indian IT companies – "International journal of human resource management by Bharat and Aggarwal"
   The article explores the link between long working hours and stress level along IT professionals in India it discloses how extended shift contribute to burnout reduced job satisfaction and high employee turnover emphasizing the need for companies to adopt flexible work agreements.
4. Work life balance and extended working hours an Indian prospective- "Indian journal of industry relationship by A. D. Sharma and Varma".
   The authors examine how extended working hours affect work life balance among Indian professional especially in sector of IT and banking. The study highlights the culture expectation of long working hours in India and the resulting challenges in maintaining a healthy work life balance.
5. Long working hours: A growing problem for India – "British safety council India by Dr. Amrut Swami".
   Discuss the prevalence of extended working hours in India's IT sector and their detrimental effects on employee health and well-being.

6. Work life balance: A challenge for employees in Indian IT and IT's industry – "ResearchGate". Analyzes the conflicts between professional and personal life among IT employees in India, highlighting increased stress and health issue due to long working hours.

2. Objectives

- To examine the negative impact of long working hours on physical and mental health issues and job satisfaction.
- To show how excessive working hours lead to reduced efficiency, enhanced errors, and lower overall productivity.
- To explore the benefits of shorter work house, flexible schedules, and work-life balance initiatives.
- To explore how the overworking holds creativity, innovation, and the ability to generate new ideas.

Research Methodology

- **Primary Data:**
  This study, descriptive and analytical in nature, collected primary data through an online questionnaire targeting IT employees. The survey covered work schedules, health impacts, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and workplace policies. A sample size of 300 IT employees was selected to ensure diverse representation. Respondents shared insights on overtime frequency, stress, fatigue, sleep patterns, and health issues like eye strain and headaches. The study also analyzed the effects of long work hours on productivity, motivation, and employer support systems.
- **Secondary Data:**
  This study incorporates secondary data from various research articles, industry reports, and scholarly publications related to working hours in the IT sector. These sources provide insights into workplace productivity, employee well-being, health aspects, and organizational policies. By analyzing existing literature, the study supports its findings with theoretical perspective offering a comprehensive understanding of the effects of a 14-hours workday.

Limitations

- The study is limited to a specific number of IT employees, which may not fully represent the entire industry.
- The study was conducted within a limited timeframe, restricting long-term observation and trend analysis.
- The data was collected through an online approach, there is a possibility that the responses may not always be entirely accurate.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

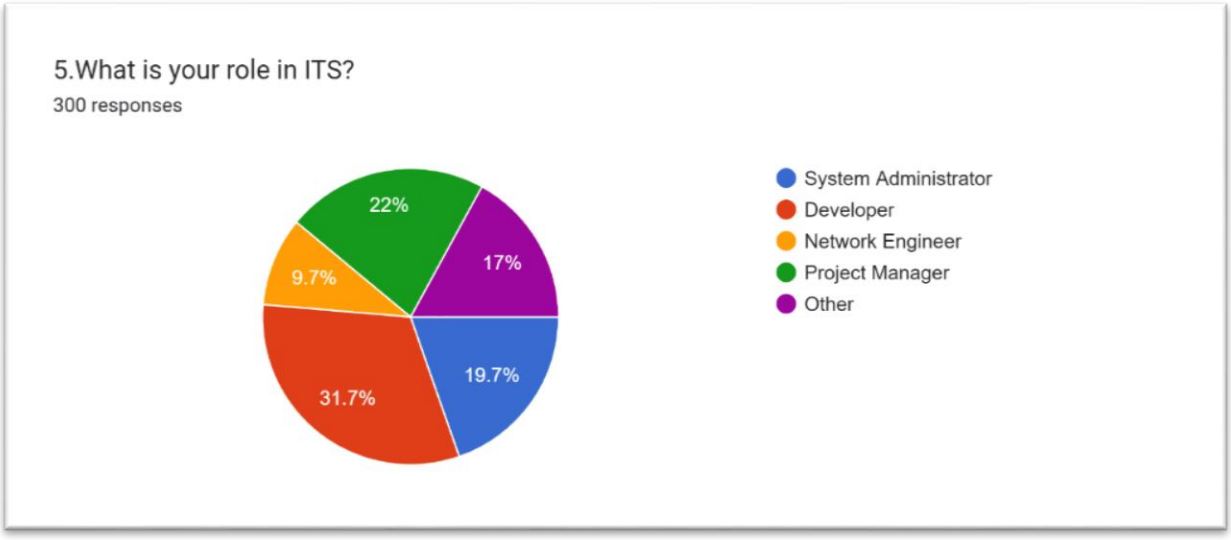

Figure 1

Interpretation

This analysis of ITS roles, based on a 14-hour workday, shows Developers (31.7%) contribution the most, followed by Project Managers (22%) and System Administrators (19.7%). Other roles (17%) and Network Engineers (9.7%) reflect specialization trends. The data highlights the dominance of software development and project-driven IT services.

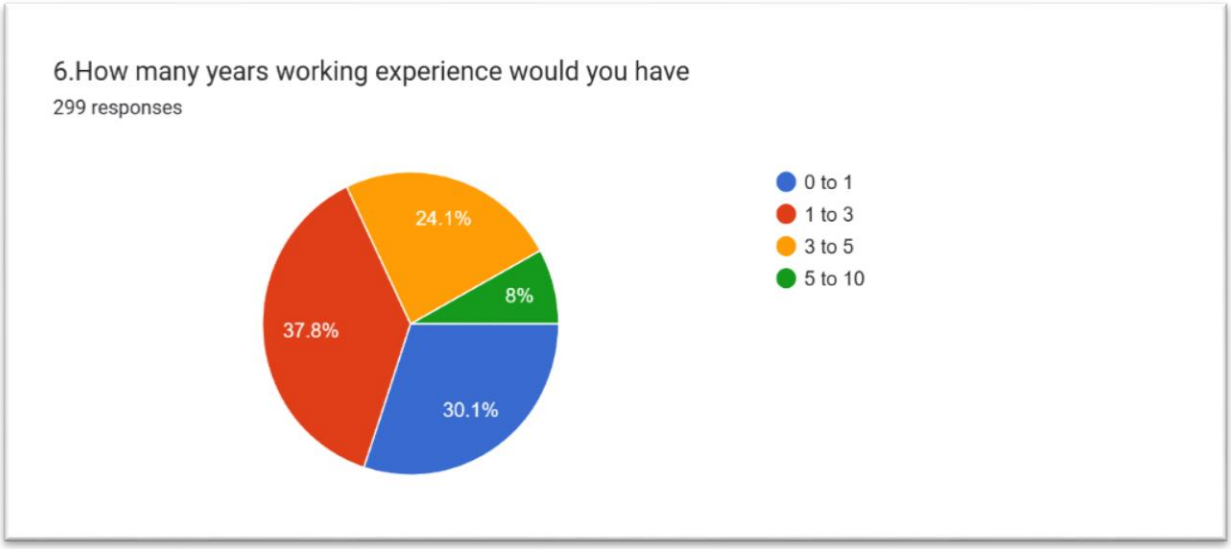

Figure 2

Interpretation

The survey of 299 respondents shows that 37.8% have 1-3 years of experience, 30.1% have 0-1 year of experience, 24% have 3-5 years, and only 8% have 5-10 years. The data highlights a predominantly early-career workforce, emphasizing the need for skill development and career growth opportunities.

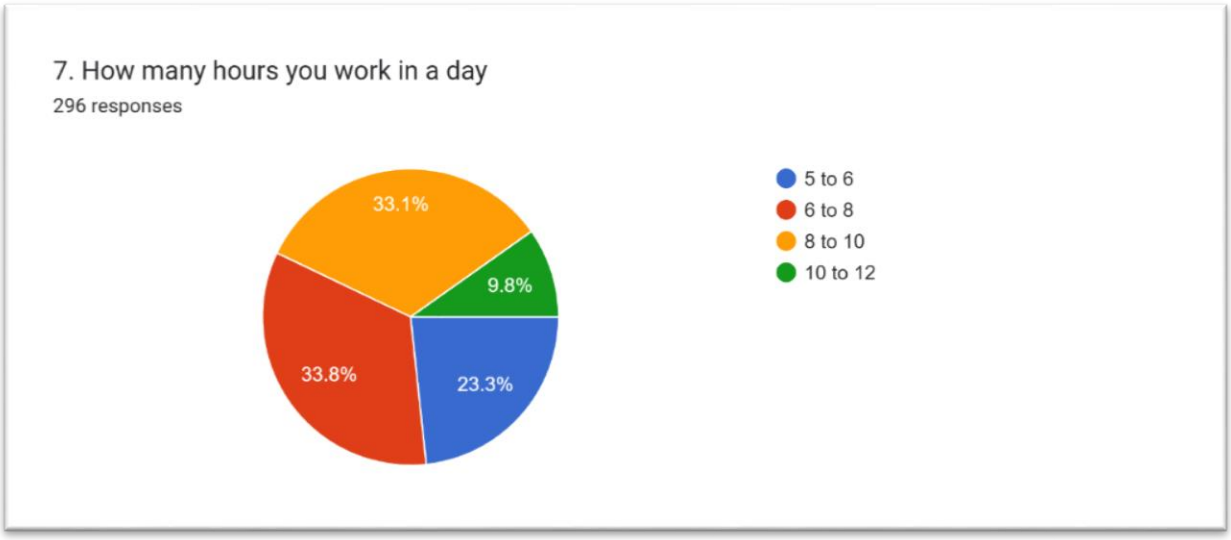

Figure 3

Interpretation

The survey of 296 respondents shows that 33.8% work 6-8 hours, 33.1% work 8-10 hours, 23.3% works 5-6 hours, and 9.8% work 10-12 hours daily. The data suggests a majority work beyond standard hours, highlighting workload intensity and potential concerns regarding work-life balance in the industry.

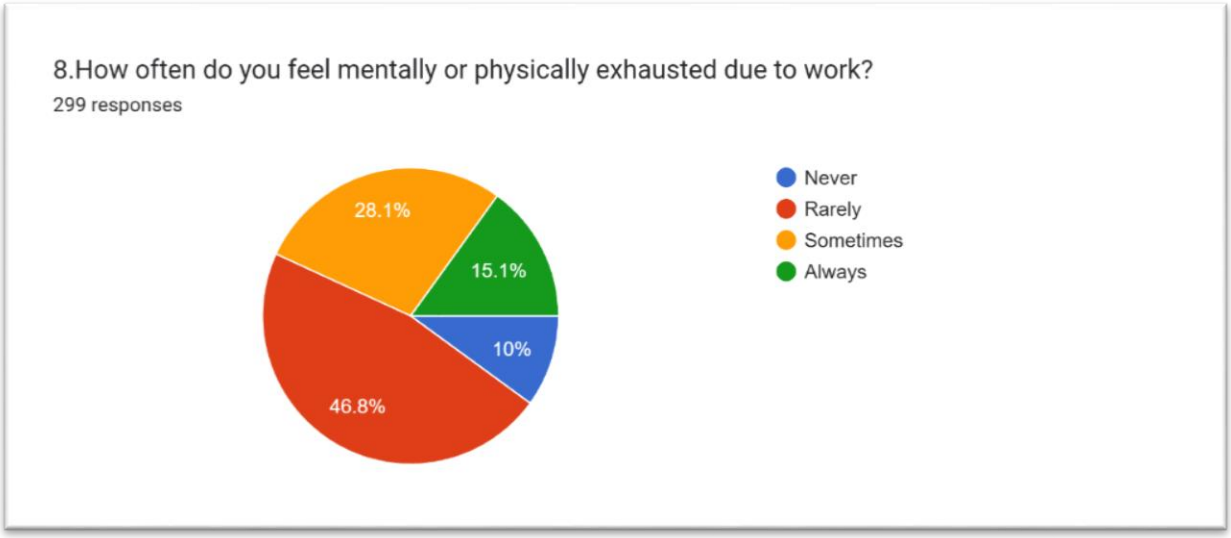

Figure 4

Interpretation

The survey of 299 respondents reveals that 46.8% rarely feel exhausted, 28.1% sometimes, 15.1% always and 10% never. While most experience occasional exhaustion, a significant portion faces constant fatigue, indicating the need for improved work-life balance stress management and wellness initiatives in the workplace.

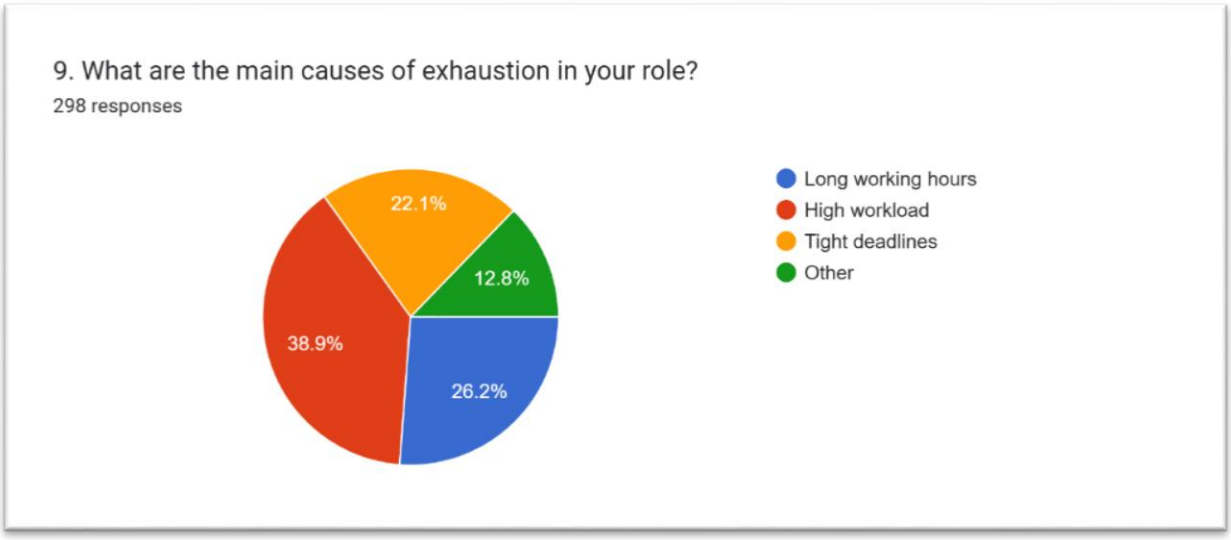

Figure 5

Interpretation

The survey of 298 respondents identifies high workload (38.9%) as the leading cause of exhaustion, followed by long working hours (26.2%), tight deadlines (22.1%), and other factors (12.8%). The data highlights the need for workload management, better time allocation, and supportive policies to enhance employee well-being and productivity.

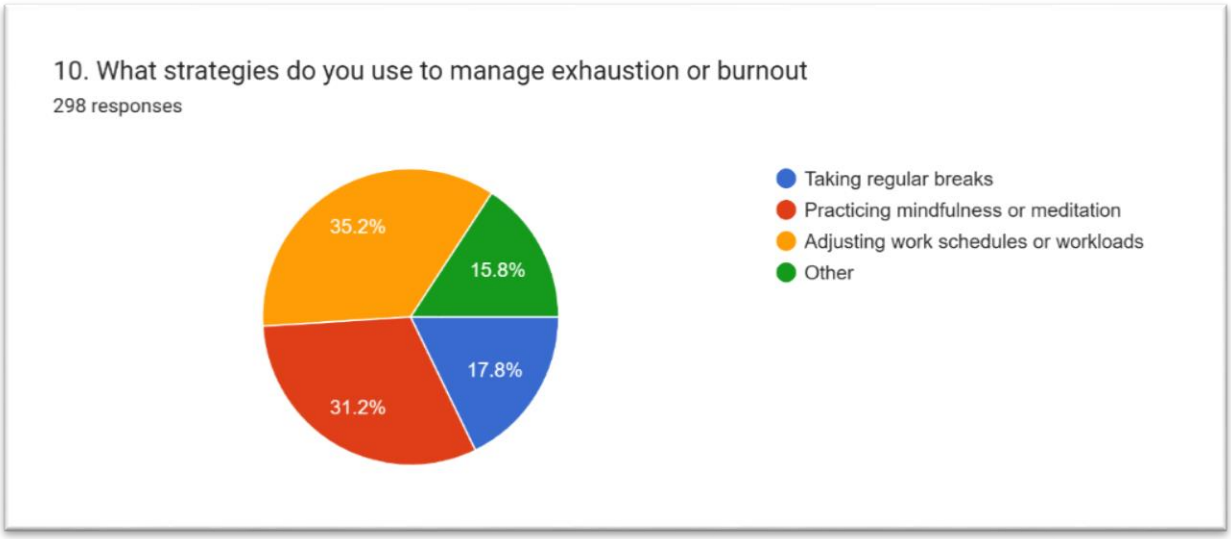

Figure 6

Interpretation

The survey of 298 respondents shows that 35.2% manage exhaustion by adjusting work schedules, 31.2% practice mindfulness or meditation, 17.8% take regular breaks, and 15.8% use other methods. The data highlights the importance of flexible work policies and mental well-being strategies in combating burnout effectively.

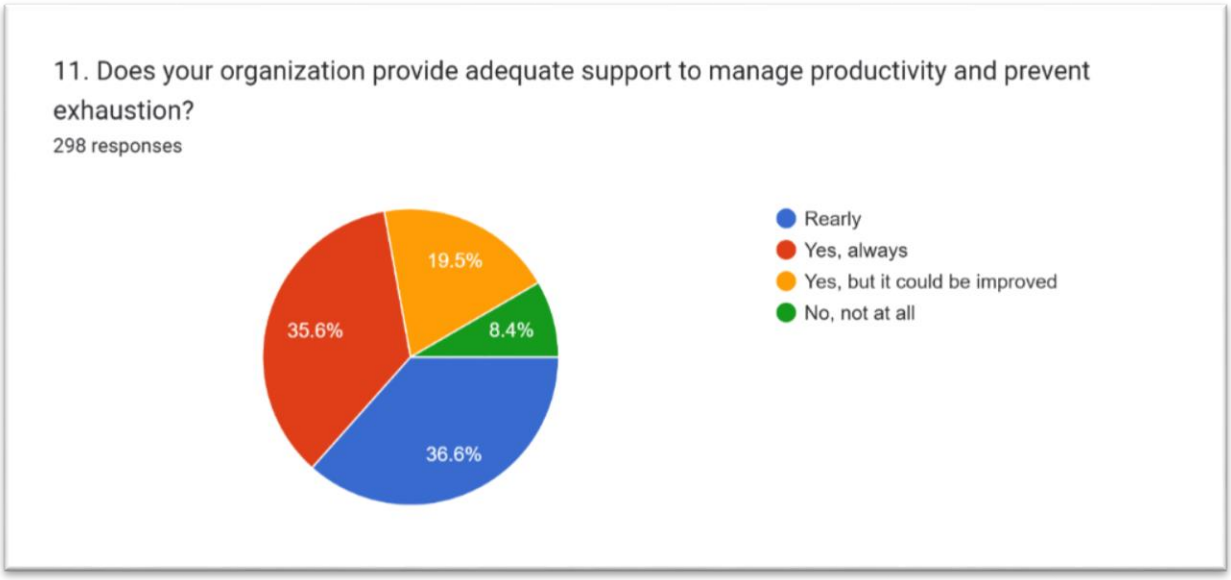

Figure 7

Interpretation

The survey of 298 respondents indicates that 36.6% say their organization rarely provides support, 35.6% say support is always available, 19.5% believe it could be improved, and 8.4% report no support. The data suggests a need for stronger organizational initiatives to enhance productivity and prevent exhaustion effectively.

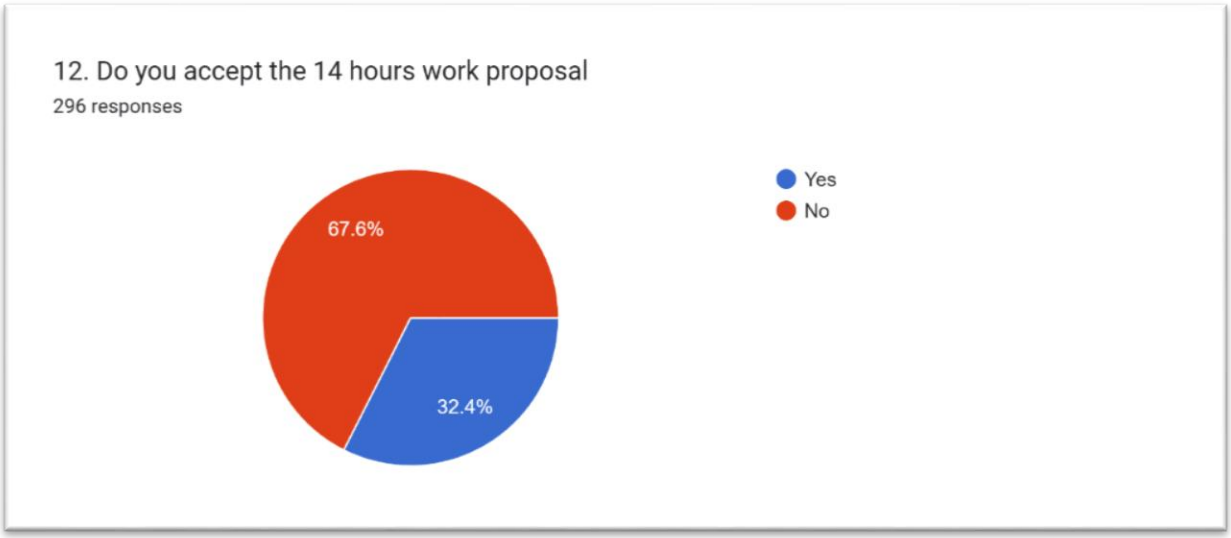

Figure 8

Interpretation

The survey of 296 respondents reveals that 67.6% reject the 14-hour work proposal, while 32.4% accept it. The data suggests that extended work hours may not be widely supported, highlighting the need for balanced schedules and policies that promote employee well-being and sustainable productivity.

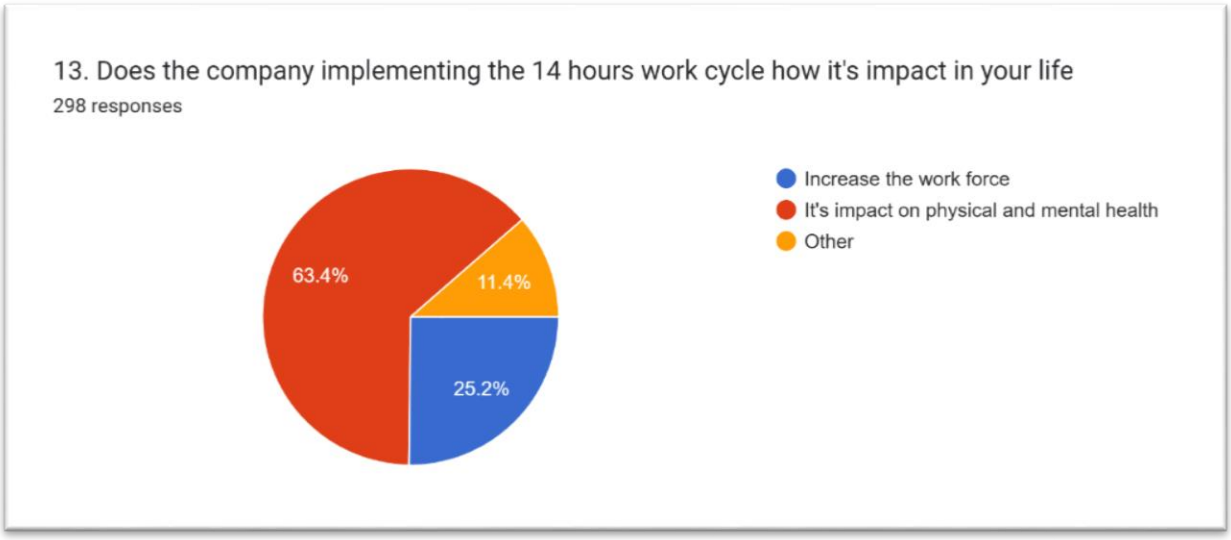

Figure 9

Interpretation

The survey of 298 respondents shows that 63.4% believe a 14-hour work cycle negatively impacts physical and mental health, while 25.2% think it necessitates increasing the workforce. Only 11.4% consider other factors. This indicates serious concerns about well-being, emphasizing the need for sustainable work policies.

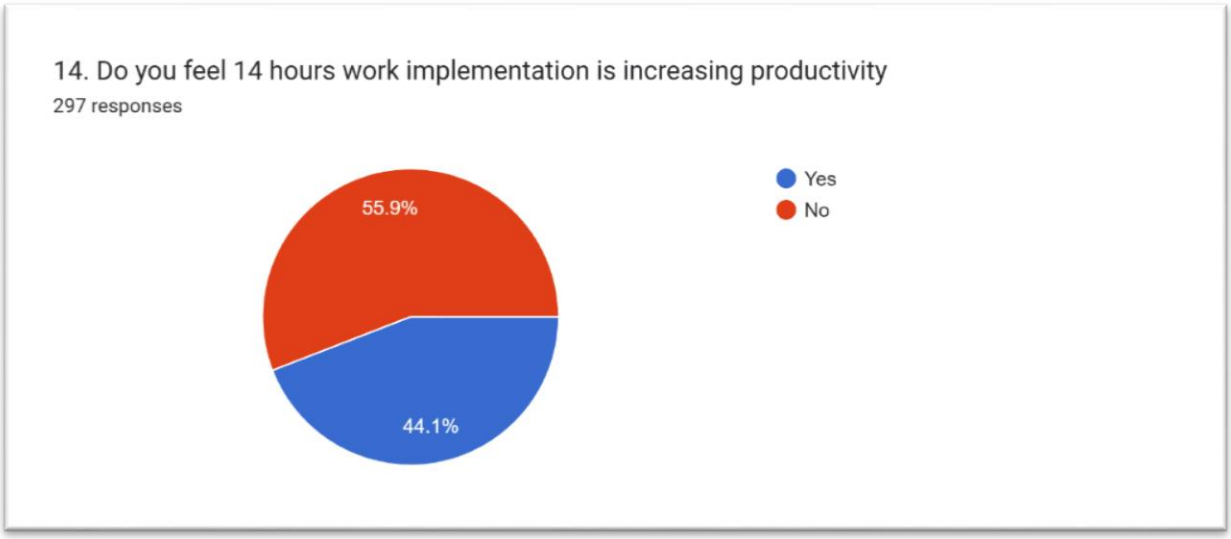

Figure 10

Interpretation

The survey of 297 respondents reveals that 55.9% believe that implementing a 14-hour work schedule does not increase productivity, while 44.1% think it does. This indicates that a majority of employees feel extended work hours may not necessarily translate to higher efficiency, highlighting potential concerns about burnout and diminishing returns on productivity.

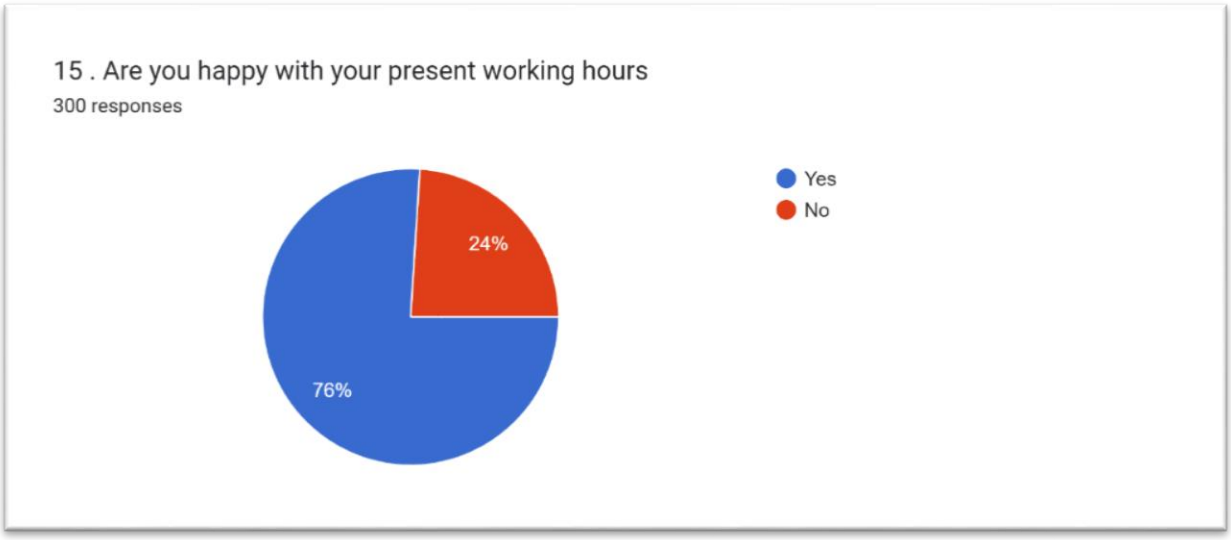

Figure 11

Interpretation

The survey of 300 respondents shows that 76% are satisfied with their current working hours, while 24% are not. This suggests that the majority of employees feel comfortable with their existing work schedules, though a significant minority may be facing challenges related to workload, work-life balance, or job expectations.

Finding and suggestions

- **Findings:**
  1. **Work-life balance challenges:**
     Employees struggled to maintain a work-life balance, with limited time for personal commitments, family, and leisure activities.
  2. **Health Impact:**
     Many respondents experienced stress, fatigue, sleep deprivation, and health issues like eye strain, headaches, and musculoskeletal pain due to prolonged screen time.
  3. **Impact On Productivity:**
     While some employees reported higher efficiency during extended hours, many experienced declining productivity, burnout, and reduced job satisfaction overtime.
  4. **Employee Retention Challenges:**
     Organizations with frequent extended work hours faced higher turnover rates, with employees seeking jobs that offer better work-life balance and flexible policies.
- **Suggestions:**
  1. **Implement flexible work policies:**
     Organizations should adopt splits shifts and hybrid work models to allow employees to manage their workload effectively without excessive strain.
  2. **Introduce Midweek Breaks (Wednesday off):**
     Providing a Wednesday off or a rotational midweek break can help employees recharge, reduce burnout, and improve productivity throughout the week.
  3. **Focus on productivity over hours:**

Instead of evaluating employees based on hours worked, organizations should focus on efficiency, task completion, and outcome-driven performance.

4. **Leverage technology and automation:**
   Companies can integrate AI-driven tools to automate repetitive tasks, optimize workload distribution, and reduce unnecessary overtime.

3. Conclusion

The debate over extending IT professionals working hours from 40 to 70 hours per week highlights a critical tension between productivity and employee well-being. While proponents argue that increased work hours could enhance completion, the findings suggest that prolonged work schedules often lead to burnout, declining efficiency, and negative impacts on mental and physical health. A comparison of GDP between India and Germany, a country with significantly shorter working hours, challenges the notion that longer work hours directly contribute to higher economic performance:

- Germany (Average weekly working hours: 34) – GDP (2023): $4.4 trillion.
- India (Average weekly working hours: 48) – GDP (2023): $ 3.7 trillion.

Despite having shorter working hours, Germany out performs India in GDP, indicating that economic success is more closely linked to productivity, innovation, and efficient work strategies rather than sheer work duration. Germany's emphasis on work-life balance, automation, and employee well-being contributes to higher productivity per hour worked, whereas excessive working hours in India may lead to diminishing returns due to burnout and declining efficiency. The study's survey results indicate that a significant majority of IT employees reject the idea of 14-hour workday, citing concerns about exhaustion, stress, and work-life balance. Data analysis reveals that excessive working hours do not necessarily improve productivity but may instead contribute to higher employee turnover and dissatisfaction. The argument that overworks hampers creativity, innovation, and overall job satisfaction.

To address these concerns, organizations should prioritize flexible work arrangements, leverage technology to reduce unnecessary workload, and focus on outcome-based performance rather than hours worked. Implementing midweek breaks, hybrid work models, and wellness initiatives can create a more sustainable and productive work environment. Ultimately, balancing business competitiveness with employee well-being is essential for long-term success in the evolving IT industry.

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