

## THE ROLE OF COPING STRATEGIES IN MANAGING WORK STRESS AND BURNOUT AMONG IT PROFESSIONALS

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The Information Technology (IT) sector plays a vital role in Sri Lanka’s economic growth. The government expects to have an IT workforce of 200,000 targeting \$15 billion market value and 15% contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2030. The IT sector is a high-stress occupational environment. This contributes to increased turnover intentions, potentially undermining national digitalization objectives. However, despite its economic potential, the IT sector is also characterized by intense workloads and psychological strain.

Within this context of occupational stress and burnout, coping strategies are mediating mechanisms that influence well-being and resilience. The study examines the role of coping strategies in managing stress and burnout among IT professionals, aiming to identify commonly adopted coping strategies and assess their relationship with stress and burnout. A quantitative design was employed with data collection from Perceived Stress Scale, Brief COPE Inventory and custom burnout inventory. Data analysis was conducted using Python, utilizing libraries such as pandas for data manipulation, seaborn for visualization, and statsmodels for regression, correlation, and mediation analyses.

The sample consisted of 275 IT professionals representing diverse roles and the analysis indicated that most employees experienced moderate (38.5%) to high (60.4%) stress levels. Adaptive coping strategies such as positive reframing, acceptance, and emotional support were linked to lower stress, whereas maladaptive strategies like self-blame and denial correlated with higher stress. The moderate-stress group exhibited a mixed profile of both adaptive and maladaptive strategies. In terms of burnout, most respondents demonstrated moderate levels (79.3%) with a risk of escalation, and nearly half reported the absence of organizational mental health support, highlighting a critical gap in workplace well-being initiatives. Overall, psychoeducation and awareness programs promoting adaptive coping strategies can effectively mitigate or prevent stress and burnout among IT professionals.

**Keywords:** *Burnout, Coping Strategies, IT Professionals, Work Stress*