Exploratory Study Of Burnout And Psychological Capital In Social Work Practice

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Abstract

Social workers play a pivotal role in sustaining humanitarian values, yet their profession often subjects them to high levels of stress and burnout, particularly due to multitasking demands. This study explores the interrelationship between multitasking, burnout, and psychological capital among social workers in South India. Employing an exploratory and empirical research design, primary data were gathered from 300 respondents using Google Forms, supplemented by secondary data from scholarly sources. The findings reveal that multitasking significantly contributes to burnout, which in turn adversely affects psychological capital. These results emphasize the need for organizational interventions aimed at mitigating burnout and promoting employee well-being. Suggested strategies include fostering fun-oriented workplaces, scheduling regular breaks, and offering non-monetary incentives such as outdoor activities. Overall, the study highlights the importance of addressing burnout to enhance psychological capital, improve work engagement, and build resilient social work practices toward 2035.

Keywords: Burnout; Psychological Capital; Social Workers; Multitasking; Work Engagement; Employee Well-being; Organizational Strategies; South India; Exploratory Study.
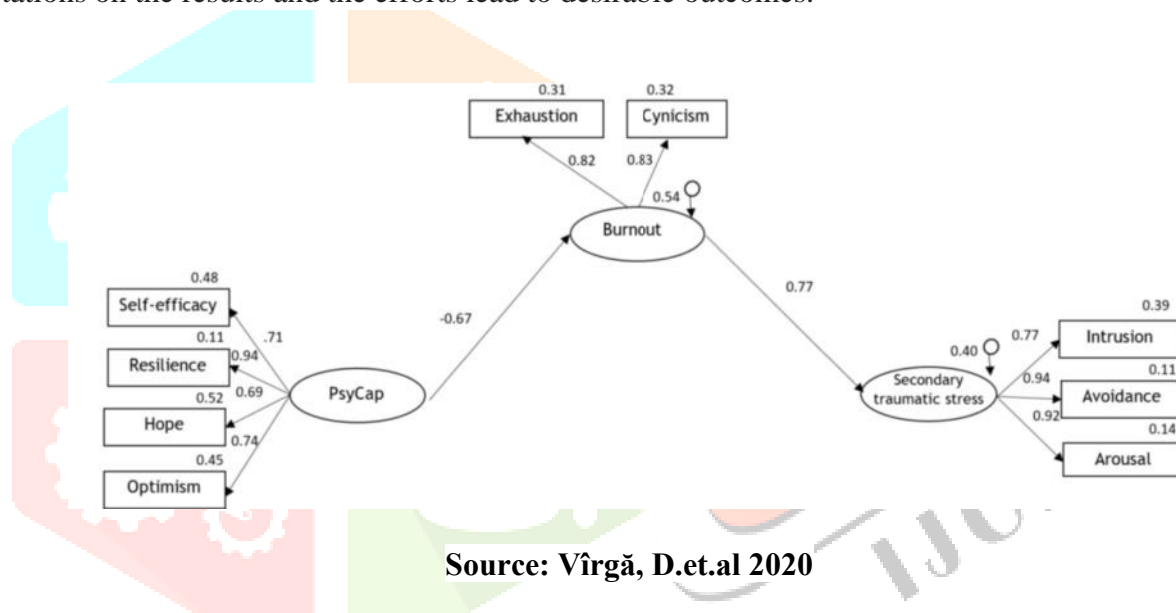
Introduction

Human resources have become the most inevitable capital in an organization. This capital is totally different from financial capital as it has life and it also engages with the organizational goals through commitment, dedication and contributions. The organizational well-being, growth and profits is totally dependent on employee mental outlook, perspective and wellbeing. They also take care of human relations as they engage with customers with effective engagement, which leads to customer retention and delight.

Social work is a noble profession where the employees engage themselves with the society and transform them as social identities. They help people from all walks of life and in their troubled, emotive, disruptive situations. The trouble could be at various levels in family, profession or business which varies in its nature, representation and intensity. These social workers understand the client's problems as they provide emotive guidance and support which helps them to overcome these issues. As they deal with distress, disasters, conflicts and problems – these social workers undergo a lot of stress in their daily organizational work. Over a period of time this leads to burnout in personal, social and organizational life. This is a regular phenomena and feature which is often found in social workers life. This research is an evaluative and exploratory study on Psychological capital (positive psychology orientation) which can provide new solutions and strategies for varied levels of burnout faced by South Indian social workers due to their multiple roles. This research is conclusive in nature, as it introduces new solutions, strategies, and approaches that utilize psychological capital mechanisms to mitigate the occurrence, severity, and prevalence of burnout among South Indian

social workers. Since these dimensions have not been previously examined, this study represents the first empirical investigation in this direction. The subsequent section will present the literature review.

Literature review

Vîrgă, D.et.al 2020 had done a research study to evaluate the role and impact of psychological capital and its nature of protection. This positive psychology concept has been applied and implemented with social workers. It is found in this study it has positive effects on burnout and trauma due to secondary stress related issues. For this study 193 Romanian workers participated and the impact was found to be positive. In this study it has been established that psychological capital has a protective role against social workers burnout. It also helps in reduction of trauma and stress which is prevalent among social workers. In this study it has been proven that hope is a strong positive aspect which provides inspiration and energy for employees to perform and achieve their objectives. This also provides the motivation necessary and the way to achieve the goals which results in organizational outcomes. In this study it is also proven that self efficacy has a positive and strong impact against burnout situations. It is the belief in the self and the mental orientation which leads to effective solutions in crisis situations. It is found in this study that social workers having higher self efficacy can solve greater and complex client problems with a helping nature and soft composure. Optimistic expectations on the results and the efforts lead to desirable outcomes.

Source: Vîrgă, D.et.al 2020

The nature and extent of resilience is determining the extent to overcome in undesirable situations. However the role and impact of psychological capital and its impact on multiple role oriented south Indian social worker burnout has not been studied or determined empirically. This research is an attempt towards it for the first time on these aspects and issues.

Tsybuliak, N et.al 2023 had done a research on the nature and extent of prevalence of Burnout during Ukraine war.
This study has been done with academic staff working there. This study has been done as a comparative study among male and female academic staff working in Ukraine during the war times. This study has been done in two phases – July 2022 an January 2023. The MBI burnout inventory scale has been administered and the extent of burnout has been evaluated. The emotional exhaustion among academic staff was more during the war and it was high with female staff who were stressed due to war oriented outcomes. The academic staff mental and social outlook has been severely stressed which was found in this study. As the relocation and migration issues were common it affected the productivity and performances of academic staff. However the application of MBI scale with South Indian social workers and the impact of multiple role on their burnout levels – has not been studied or evaluated as this research is an attempt on it.

Bressi and Vaden (2017) conducted a research study examining the role and long-term impact of self-care on

burnout. Their findings indicated a significant positive effect of self-care in reducing burnout levels. However, these factors and dimensions have not been explored in the context of South Indian social workers, and the present study seeks to address this gap.

Johnston, L et.al 2020 had done review paper on ways and means to support elderly people. In this study the role of resilience and its impact on employee retention among health care workers is evaluated. This study has been done with health care workers who support older and elderly people. In this study thematic analysis is also done.It is also found in this study that resilience of front line social workers would lead to retention in organizations. In this study the need for empirical studies is reinforced as an attempt has been made with this research to reduce this research gap which is evident.

 VUCA framework (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) of Burnout among social workers

Dima,G et;al 2021 had done an evaluative study focusing on the factors regarding stress in Job and its impact on burnout. This study has been done during Pandemic period. This study has been done with social workers. It was found that there was a high level of stress which was prevalent among social workers during pandemic. There were also high levels of burnouts which were found in personal and work situations. Client oriented burnout was also prevalent which was mainly due to organizational aspects and its impact. As the nature of job and its pressure was high it lead to work related burnouts more prominent among social workers.

	N	Percent	Interval Values
None to low level of burnout	12	14.5%	[0;25]
Low to medium level of burnout	23	27.7%	[25;50]
Medium to high level of burnout	35	44.2%	[50;75]
High to very high level of burnout	13	15.7%	[75;100]

Source : Dima,G et;al 2021

It is evident from this work that the burnout levels ranges from medium to high levels with 44% of social workers. As such these kind of empirical studies have not been done with South Indian social workers as this research is an attempt on it.

Types of burnout among social workers

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Personal burnout (PB)	83	0	100	55.9	19.2	0.87
Work-related burnout (WB)	83	0	100	52.5	20.6	0.82
Client-related burnout (CB)	83	0	100	38.4	23.2	0.88

Source: Dima,G et;al 2021

The study revealed that client-related burnout is most prevalent among social workers, followed closely by work-related burnout. However, the influence of multiple role demands on burnout among South Indian social workers has not yet been examined. This research seeks to address this gap. The following section outlines the research methodology.

Research methodology

Aim of the study

This study seeks to evaluate the diverse factors influencing burnout among South Indian social workers. It further examines the effects of their multiple role responsibilities and the extent to which these contribute to burnout. Additionally, the study aims to investigate the nature of the relationship between burnout and psychological capital.

Dimensions of the study

Independent variable: burnout
Influencing factor: stressful job, remuneration, multi-tasking, job & personal life stress, unwillingness to work, emotional exhaustion
Moderating factors: work breaks and entertainment

Research Type: This research would be exploratory and conclusive in nature. This research is exploratory as it would explore in to the various factors and dimensions of burnout which is prevalent among South Indian social workers. The effects of multiple role and its impact on burnout would be explored also. The strategy of psychological capital and its long term effect would also be studied and provided in this study.

Research method: This research is Empirical and quantitative in nature. To measure the extent of burnout prevalent among social workers in South India - Malachi Burnout inventory questionnaire would be used which is the standard tool. With this tool the nature and effects of exhaustion, depersonalization and personal achievement would be measured. Other dimensions would be measured with questionnaire which would be administered with south Indian social workers using Google form.

Problem statement

Social workers have more emotional contributions in their day today routine. This involves lot of stress, anxiety which leads to depressive mindset and burnout. More than 30% of European employees (Eurofound, 2016) engage in emotional labor as a part of their work. As social workers are involved in multiple roles there is an immense need to effectively manage their emotions which leads to their well being also. Research studies have indicated that social workers are indeed affected by emotional stress (Blomberg et al.,2015; Manttari-van der Kuip, 2015; Travis et al., 2016). which is a part of their work which leads to suppression, anxiety and depression. It is evident that that the nature and extent of burnout prevalent in South Indian social workers has not been ascertained. This has huge implications on their personal, social and professional outlook and accomplishments. It is also known that the nature and extent of burnout is only studied in social workers as no study has been done to provide strategies and solutions to reduce burnouts among South Indian social workers. This research would evaluate these problems and issues as it intends to provide effective strategies and solutions also.

Objectives of the study

1. To find out the nature of burnout prevalent among South Indian social work employees
2. To determine the relationship between burnout and psychological capital
3. To evaluate the role of multitasking on burnout among south Indian social work employees

Data analysis

Statistical analysis on relationship between Burnout & psychological capital

Table1 showing Feeling more stressed and exhausted due to their job

S. No.	Feeling more stressed and exhausted due to their job	No. of Respondents	% Of Respondents
1	To an Extremely Large Extent	42	14
2	To a Very Large Extent	30	10
3	To a Large Extent	69	23
4	To a Moderate Extent	63	21
5	To a Small Extent	66	22
6	To an Extremely Small Extent	30	10
	Total	300	100

Chart1: Feeling more stressed and exhausted due to their job

Interpretation

It is evident from the above chart that 47% of the total respondents have reported high levels of stress and exhaustion. This stress and exhaustion due to their multiple role results in burnout. This has become more
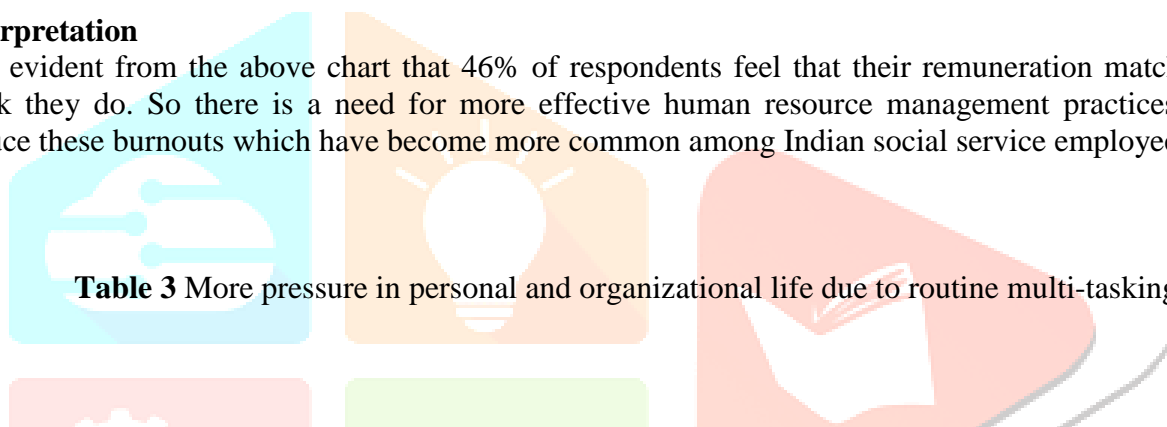
prevalent and prominent among Indian social workers.

Table 2 Job remuneration matches with the work they do

S. No.	Job remuneration matches with the work they do	No. of Respondents	% Of Respondents
1	To an Extremely Large Extent	60	20
2	Toa Very Large Extent	24	8
3	To a Large Extent	53	18
4	To a Moderate Extent	72	24
5	To a Small Extent	72	24
6	To an Extremely Small Extent	19	6
	Total	300	100

Interpretation

It is evident from the above chart that 46% of respondents feel that their remuneration matches with the work they do. So there is a need for more effective human resource management practices which can reduce these burnouts which have become more common among Indian social service employees.
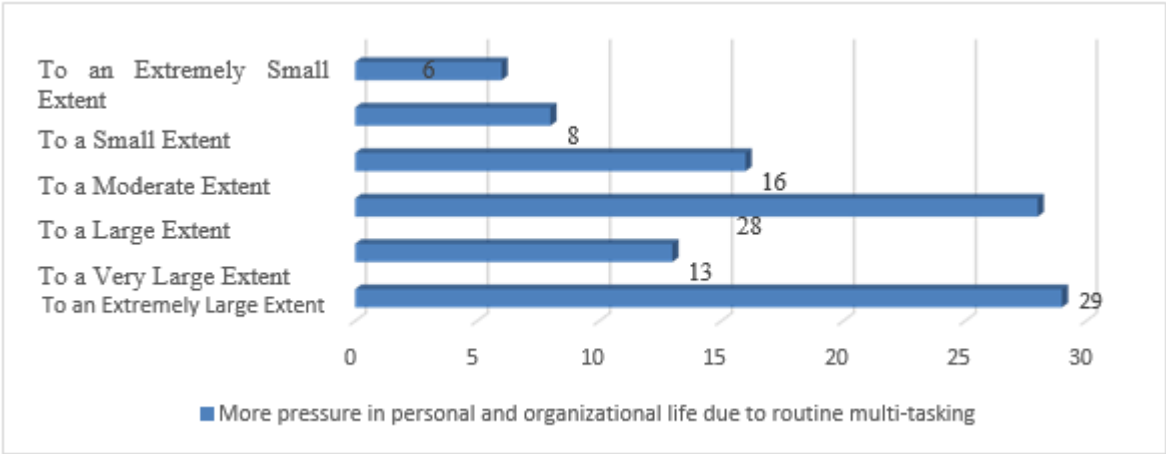
Table 3 More pressure in personal and organizational life due to routine multi-tasking

S. No.	More pressure in personal and organizational life due to routine multi-tasking	No. of Respondents	% Of Respondents
1	To an Extremely Large Extent	87	29
2	To a Very Large Extent	39	13
3	Toa Large Extent	85	28
4	To a Moderate Extent	49	16
5	To a Small Extent	24	8
6	To an Extremely Small Extent	16	6
	Total	300	100

Chart 3: More pressure in personal and organizational life due to routine multi-tasking
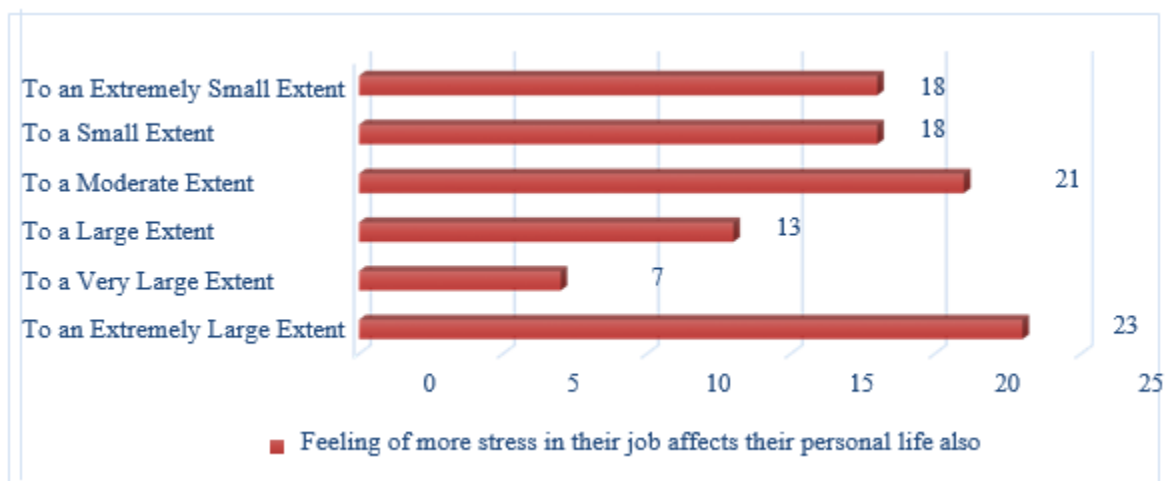
Interpretation

It is evident from the above chart that 70% of Indian social workers reported that they are experiencing very high work pressure due to multi-tasking. This high pressure multi-tasking work environment leads to burnout. This also affects the psychological capital of Indian social service employees.

Table 4 Feeling more stress in their job affects their personal life also

S. No.	Feeling of more stress in their job affects their personal life also	No. of Respondents	% Of Respondents
1	To an Extremely Large Extent	69	23
2	To a Very Large Extent	21	7
3	To a Large Extent	39	13
4	To a Moderate Extent	62	21
5	To a Small Extent	54	18
6	To an Extremely Small Extent	55	18
	Total	300	100

Chart 4: Feeling of more stress in their job affects their personal life also

Feeling of more stress in their job affects their personal life also

Interpretation

It is evident from the above chart that 43% of the total respondents have experienced very high work pressure which had also affected their personal lives and well-being. This has also affected their life balances and professional engagement to work and contributions. It is very clear that very high work pressure is more prevalent among Indian social service employees.

Table 5 Feeling more emotionally exhausted and tired due to their work

S. No.	Feeling more emotionally exhausted and tired due to their work	No. of Respondents	% Of Respondents
1	To an Extremely Large Extent	81	27
2	To a Very Large Extent	37	12
3	To a Large Extent	37	12
4	To a Moderate Extent	53	18
5	To a Small Extent	58	19
6	To an Extremely Small Extent	34	12
	Total	300	100

	0	5	10	15	20	25	27	30
To an Extremely Small Extent				12				
To a Small Extent						19		
To a Moderate Extent						18		
To a Large Extent				12				
To a Very Large Extent				12				
To an Extremely Large Extent								27

Feeling more emotionally exhausted and tired due to their work

Interpretation

It is found from this study that 51% of the total respondents do feel emotionally exhausted & tired due to their work. This is also a critical area of concern as it could lead to emotional and psychological imbalances, breakdown and burnout. It is also evident from this study that burnout has become a common feature among Indian social service employees. This has also largely affected the psychological capital and value of Indian social service employees

Table 6 Feeling of unwillingness to go to work

S. No.	Feeling of unwillingness to go to work	No .of Respondents	%Of Respondents
1	To an Extremely Large Extent	48	16
2	To a Very Large Extent	42	14
3	To a Large Extent	18	6
4	To a Moderate Extent	77	26
5	To a Small Extent	67	22
6	To an Extremely Small Extent	48	16
	Total	300	100

Chart 6: Feeling of unwillingness to go to work

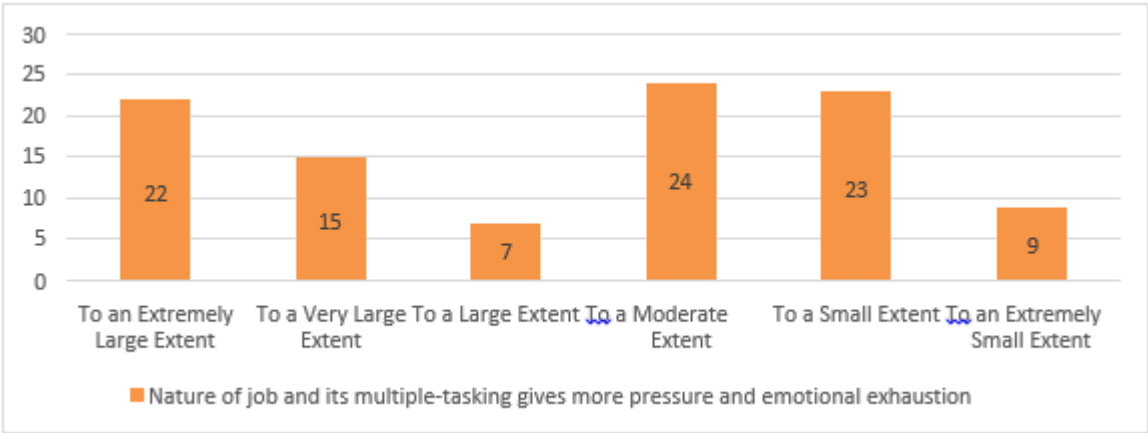|	0	5	10	15	20	25	30
To an Extremely Small Extent				16			
To a Small Extent						22	
To a Moderate Extent							26
To a Large Extent		6					
To a Very Large Extent				14			
To an Extremely Large Extent				16			

Feeling of unwillingness to go to work

Interpretation

It is evident from this study that 36% of the respondents do not want to go to work at all times. They feel socially and personally, professionally disengaged from work as it could take lot of time to recover from this emotion. 26% of the respondents do feel this reluctance to go to work very mildly. This shows that the nature of disengagement to work in Indian social work employees minds have risen constantly and consistently which is a real cause of concern and worry. This could affect the total psychological capital of Indian social work employees which can have negative effects on performance, profits and outcomes.

Table 7 Nature of job and its multiple-tasking gives them more pressure and emotional exhaustion

S. No.	Nature of job and its multiple-tasking gives more pressure and emotional exhaustion	No. of Respondents	% Of Respondents
1	To an Extremely Large Extent	66	22
2	To a Very Large Extent	44	15
3	To a Large Extent	21	7
4	To a Moderate Extent	71	24
5	To a Small Extent	70	23
6	To an Extremely Small Extent	28	9
	Total	300	100

Chart7: Nature of job and its multiple-tasking gives more pressure and emotional exhaustion
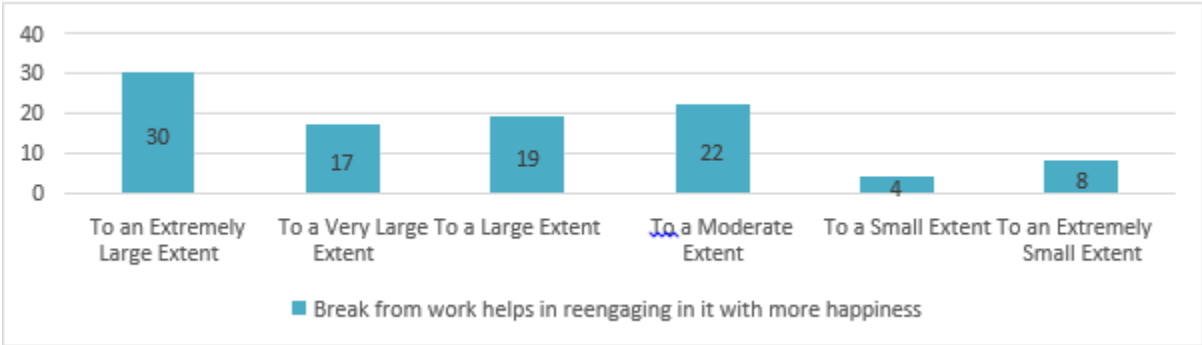

Interpretation

It is evident from the above chart that multitasking and its multiple role expectations do create work pressure and emotional exhaustion among Indian social service employees. 44% of the total respondents do feel an increased work pressure and emotional exhaustion due to multitasking and its multiple role expectations.

Table 8 Break from work helps in reengaging in it with more happiness

S. No.	Break from work helps in reengaging in it with more happiness	No. of Respondents	% Of Respondents
1	To an Extremely Large Extent	91	30
2	To a Very Large Extent	50	17
3	To a Large Extent	57	19
4	To a Moderate Extent	65	22
5	To a Small Extent	12	4
6	To an Extremely Small Extent	25	8
	Total	300	100

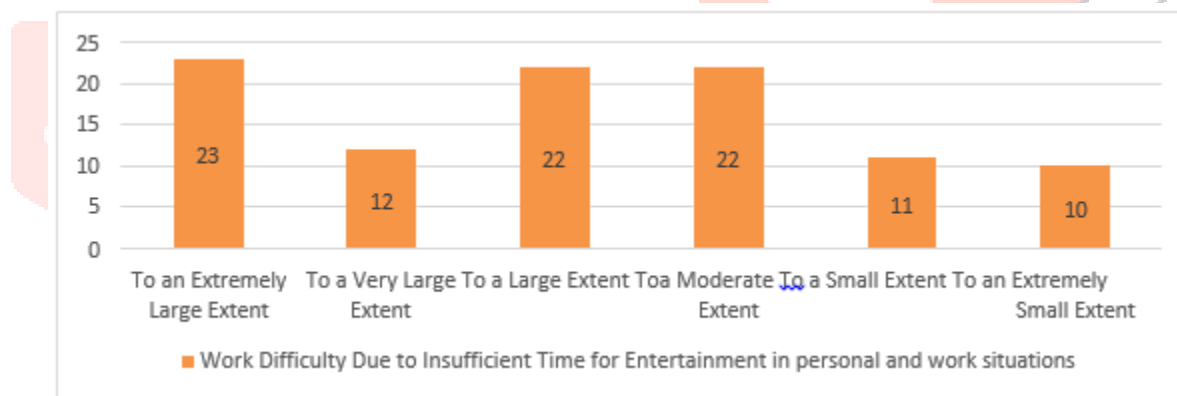**Chart 8: Break from work helps in reengaging in it with more happiness**

Interpretation

It is found from this study that break away from work and work routines could help Indian social service employees to engage in their work with renewed commitment as it leads to increased work engagement also. This also could increase happy work engagement which could also have transformative effects in their personal lives and well-being also.

Table 9 Work Difficulty Due to Insufficient Time for Entertainment in personal and work situations

S. No.	Work Difficulty Due to Insufficient Time for Entertainment in personal and work situations	No. of Respondents	% Of Respondents
1	To an Extremely Large Extent	70	23
2	To a Very Large Extent	36	12
3	To a Large Extent	65	22
4	To a Moderate Extent	67	22
5	To a Small Extent	34	11
6	To an Extremely Small Extent	28	10
	Total	300	100

Chart 9: Work Difficulty Due to Insufficient Time for Entertainment in personal and work situations

Interpretation

It is evident from the above chart that 57% of the respondents agree that they have very limited time for personal life. Work life engages their life to a larger and greater extent. This has really made personal life and living challenging. The challenges in work and work situations has made their personal life more complicated in its nature as there is a need for work reschedule and effective management which could improve personal life and living.

Major findings of this study

1. Majority of the respondents agree that they have very limited time for personal life
2. Majority of the respondents state that break away from work and work routines could help Indian social service employees
3. Majority of the respondents state that multitasking and its multiple role expectations do create work pressure and emotional exhaustion among Indian social service employees
4. Majority of the respondents do not want to go to work at all times.
5. Majority of the total respondents do feel emotionally exhausted & tired due to their work
6. Majority of the total respondents have experienced very high work pressure which had also affected their personal lives and well being
7. majority of Indian social workers reported that they are experiencing very high work pressure due to multi-tasking
8. Majority of respondents feel that their remuneration matches with the work they do.
9. Majority of the total respondents have reported high levels of stress and exhaustion. This stress and exhaustion due to their multiple role results in burnout.

Findings and suggestions

1. Indian social work employees need to engage in their work with renewed commitment as it leads to increased work engagement also. This is possible with break away from routine work. Family trips, organizational camps, trekking and outing could make them refresh their physical and mental energy as they could contribute to a greater extent. Games – indoor and outdoor facility, gym could be provided for these employees as they could rejuvenate from their daily work schedules. They can also have fun oriented work places which can make them more committed and engaged in work.
2. As Indian social work employees do find very limited time for personal life their organizational and personal lives are totally affected. There is a need for work life balance as this could help them to bring back their work life with more commitment and confidence.
3. As multitasking increases work load and work pressure –there is a need for job rotation, job description, job enrichment and job enlargement which can increase their commitment to work and personal life engagements.
4. There is a need to create fun oriented work places for future
5. It is also evident that burnout has a negative effect on psychological capital which has to be managed with purposive strategies of inclusiveness and work breaks.

Conclusion

It is concluded in this study that Indian social work employees are facing lot of issues and challenges due to multi tasking roles and constant engagement with people. It is concluded that they need more work breaks and change over from their routine work life. It is concluded that there is a need for crafting new job roles with enlargement and enrichment which can also increase their engagement. There is a need for Indian social organizations to give rest and free time to employees as they can spend time with their families and friends. It is concluded that the organizational environment must be reorganized as it could become more friendly, conversant and engaging. Indoor and outdoor game environment could be created in work spaces as it could increase commitment and contributions. It is evident from this study that burnout has a negative effect on psychological capital as it has to be managed very effectively. Friendly human resource practices with job enlargement, enrichments, rewards and non monetary benefits could help in effective retention of Indian social work employees towards 2035.

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