

Evaluating the Impact of Workplace Stress Management Initiatives on Employee Job Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a comprehensive empirical investigation into the effectiveness of five structured workplace stress management initiatives on employee job satisfaction. A quasi-experimental study involving 360 employees drawn from six industry sectors was conducted over twelve months. Data were collected using the Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) and the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). Five interventions mindfulness programs, flexible work arrangements, Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), physical wellness programs, and training and development initiatives were systematically administered to the experimental group (n=180) while the control group (n=180) received no intervention. Analysis using one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation, and multiple linear regression revealed statistically significant improvements ($p < 0.001$) in job satisfaction scores across all initiative types, with effect sizes (η^2) ranging from 0.141 to 0.232. Physical wellness programs demonstrated the highest improvement (28.7%), followed by mindfulness programs (32.8%). A strong negative correlation ($r = -0.712$) was established between perceived stress and job satisfaction. Comparative analysis with seventeen prior studies confirms that the hybrid multi-initiative approach adopted in this study outperforms single-modality interventions. These findings provide actionable evidence for organizational policy-makers seeking to enhance workforce wellbeing and productivity through structured stress mitigation strategies.

Keywords: Workplace Stress Management, Job Satisfaction, Employee Assistance Programs, Mindfulness Interventions, Occupational Health, Quasi-Experimental Design, ANOVA, Pearson Correlation, Human Resource Management

I. Introduction

Occupational stress has emerged as one of the most pervasive and economically consequential challenges confronting modern organizations. According to the American Institute of Stress, workplace stress costs the United States economy an estimated \$300 billion annually through absenteeism, diminished productivity, employee turnover, and healthcare expenditure [1]. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified workplace stress as a "global epidemic," projecting that by 2030, depression and anxiety both significantly exacerbated by occupational stressors will impose the single largest economic burden on global health systems [2].

Despite this recognition, many organizations continue to invest minimally in evidence-based stress management infrastructure. The gap between organizational awareness and structured intervention remains wide, particularly in emerging economies where occupational health frameworks are nascent. India, the world's most populous nation and a rapidly growing industrial economy, presents a particularly salient context: a 2023 Deloitte survey found that 47% of Indian corporate employees

reported clinically significant stress levels, with only 28% of surveyed organizations maintaining formal wellness programs [3].

Job satisfaction broadly defined as an employee's affective and cognitive evaluation of their work experience is recognized as a critical mediator between occupational stressors and organizational outcomes including productivity, turnover intention, and organizational citizenship behavior [4]. While the stress-satisfaction relationship is well-documented in theoretical frameworks such as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model [5] and the Person-Environment Fit theory [6], empirical evidence evaluating the comparative impact of specific organizational interventions remains fragmented and methodologically inconsistent.

The present study addresses these gaps through a rigorous quasi-experimental design, evaluating five distinct stress management initiatives implemented across six industry sectors over twelve months. The primary objective is to determine which intervention types yield the greatest improvements in employee job satisfaction and to quantify the relationship between perceived stress reduction and satisfaction gains.

A. Research Objectives

The following primary objectives guided this investigation:

- To evaluate the pre-and-post intervention changes in employee job satisfaction scores across five initiative types.
- To determine the longitudinal trajectory of perceived stress levels over the 12-month intervention period.
- To quantify the correlation between stress reduction and job satisfaction improvement across departmental groups.
- To compare the relative effectiveness of each initiative using ANOVA and effect size metrics.
- To benchmark present findings against prior empirical literature through a systematic comparison study.

B. Research Hypotheses

H1: Employees who participate in structured stress management initiatives will report significantly higher job satisfaction scores compared to those in the control group ($p < 0.05$).

H2: Physical wellness programs will yield the highest improvement in job satisfaction scores among all five initiative categories.

H3: A significant negative correlation exists between perceived stress levels and job satisfaction scores ($r < -0.5$, $p < 0.001$).

II. Literature Review

The theoretical foundations underpinning this study derive from three primary conceptual frameworks. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, proposed by Bakker and Demerouti [5], posits that job demands deplete employee energy and lead to burnout, while adequate job resources buffer against stress and foster engagement. Under this framework, stress management initiatives function as resource-enhancement mechanisms that restore the demands-resources equilibrium.

Richardson and Rothstein's [7] meta-analysis of 36 controlled studies on occupational stress interventions identified cognitive-behavioral approaches as the most effective modality, achieving an average effect size of $d = 0.68$. However, their analysis noted a significant publication bias toward individual-level interventions, underrepresenting organizational-level strategies such as flexible scheduling and environmental redesign.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programs have received substantial empirical attention since Kabat-Zinn's foundational work [8]. Workplace adaptations of MBSR have demonstrated significant reductions in cortisol biomarkers and self-reported stress in randomized controlled trials [9]. Bhui and colleagues [10] found that brief mindfulness interventions integrated into the workday reduced burnout by 19% over eight weeks, with corresponding improvements in work engagement scores.

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) represent a longstanding organizational intervention, yet their effectiveness evidence base is mixed. Mrazek et al. [11] observed that EAP utilization rates rarely exceed 6–8% of eligible employees, limiting population-level impact despite strong individual-level outcomes. Physical wellness programs, including structured exercise, ergonomic optimization, and nutrition counseling, have demonstrated bidirectional benefits reducing stress while improving cardiovascular health, energy levels, and cognitive performance [12].

The evidence on flexible work arrangements is particularly salient in the post-pandemic context. Stansfeld and Candy [14] conducted a systematic review of 21 studies and found that flexible scheduling reduced role conflict a primary stressor by an average of 23%, though effects varied considerably by job type, seniority level, and organizational culture. Notably, no study to date has simultaneously evaluated all five initiative types within a single quasi-experimental framework, representing the primary contribution of the present study.

III. Research Methodology

The study employed a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test control group design. This design was selected as true random assignment was not logistically feasible across participating organizations, while the inclusion of a matched control group preserved the ability to attribute observed changes to specific interventions rather than temporal or contextual confounders.

A. Research Design Flowchart

The complete research methodology pipeline is illustrated in Fig. 1 below, depicting the sequential processes from problem identification through final recommendation generation.



Fig. 1: Research Methodology Flowchart Sequential Process from Problem Identification to Recommendations

B. Participants

A total of 360 full-time employees were recruited from six major industry sectors Information Technology, Healthcare, Manufacturing, Banking & Finance, Retail, and Education across four metropolitan cities in India (Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad). Inclusion criteria required a minimum of one year of organizational tenure and absence of pre-existing psychiatric diagnoses documented in occupational health records. Participants were stratified by department and then randomly assigned to experimental (n=180) or control (n=180) conditions. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the study protocol received ethical clearance from the Institutional Review Board (IRB Ref: OHS-2023-R-044).

C. Measures

Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS): Spector's [15] 36-item JSS assessed nine facets of job satisfaction (pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, coworkers, nature of work, and communication). Items rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = Disagree Very Much; 6 = Agree Very Much). Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$ in the current sample.

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14): Cohen's [16] PSS-14 measured the degree to which situations in life are appraised as stressful, covering feelings of uncontrollability, unpredictability, and overload. Scores range from 0–56; higher scores indicate greater perceived stress. Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$ in the current sample.

Burnout Inventory (BI): A twelve-item adaptation of the Maslach Burnout Inventory General Survey (MBI-GS) [17] assessed emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy. Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.83$.

Work Engagement Scale (WES): The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) [18] assessed vigor, dedication, and absorption. Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$ in the current sample.

D. Interventions

All five initiatives were delivered by certified occupational health professionals over the 12-month study period. Each experimental group participant was enrolled in a primary initiative based on departmental assignment, with cross-initiative participation tracked to control for dosage confounds:

- **Mindfulness Programs:** 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) protocol, two 90-minute sessions per week, delivered in-person and via mobile application.
- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Introduction of hybrid work (3 days remote, 2 days on-site), flexible start/end times within a 2-hour window, and compressed four-day workweeks for operational staff.
- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAP):** Access to six free confidential counseling sessions per year, 24/7 telephonic support helpline, and legal/financial advisory services.
- **Physical Wellness Programs:** On-site gym access, structured group exercise sessions (3× per week), nutritional counseling, and ergonomic workstation assessments.
- **Training & Development Initiatives:** Monthly skill-development workshops, leadership mentoring programs, and individualized career development plans.

E. Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29.0 and R version 4.3.1. The analytical sequence comprised: (1) Descriptive statistics and normality testing (Shapiro-Wilk); (2) Independent samples t-tests for pre-intervention group equivalence; (3) One-way ANOVA with Tukey HSD post-hoc tests for between-group comparisons; (4) Pearson product-moment correlation for bivariate relationships; (5) Multiple linear regression to identify predictors of post-intervention job satisfaction; and (6) Cohen's d and partial eta-squared (η^2) for effect size quantification. Alpha was set at 0.05 for all inferential tests.

IV. Results And Analysis

A. Participant Demographics

Table I presents the demographic profile of the full study sample (N=360). The sample was predominantly male (55.0%), aged 31–40 years (39.4%), and held a Bachelor's Degree (52.5%). No statistically significant demographic differences were found between the experimental and control groups at baseline (all $p > 0.12$), confirming successful group matching.

TABLE-I: Demographic Profile of Study Participants (N=360)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	198	55.0
	Female	155	43.1
	Non-binary/Other	7	1.9
Age Group	21–30 years	89	24.7
	31–40 years	142	39.4
	41–50 years	96	26.7
	51–60 years	33	9.2
Education	High School	31	8.6
	Bachelor's Degree	189	52.5
	Master's Degree	114	31.7
	Doctorate	26	7.2
Department	IT & Technology	78	21.7
	Human Resources	54	15.0
	Operations	72	20.0
	Sales & Marketing	66	18.3
	R&D	90	25.0
Experience	1–5 years	98	27.2
	6–10 years	124	34.4
	11–20 years	101	28.1
	20+ years	37	10.3

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

B. Descriptive Statistics

Table-II presents descriptive statistics for all outcome variables stratified by group. Experimental group participants showed markedly higher mean job satisfaction (76.3 vs. 58.4) and substantially lower perceived stress (44.2 vs. 68.7) compared to controls at post-test. Work engagement scores were also significantly elevated in the experimental group (71.6 vs. 55.1), while burnout indices were considerably reduced (41.8 vs. 62.3). All distributions approximated normality ($|skewness| < 0.40$), satisfying the parametric analysis assumption.

TABLE-II: Descriptive Statistics by Group for All Outcome Variables

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skewness
Job Satisfaction (JSS)	Control	180	58.4	9.2	32	81	-0.21
	Experimental	180	76.3	8.7	48	96	-0.34
Perceived Stress (PSS)	Control	180	68.7	10.4	41	95	0.18
	Experimental	180	44.2	9.8	22	72	0.29
Work Engagement	Control	180	55.1	11.3	28	84	0.11
	Experimental	180	71.6	10.6	45	92	-0.15
Burnout Index	Control	180	62.3	8.9	38	88	0.24
	Experimental	180	41.8	8.4	20	67	0.33

Note: JS = Job Satisfaction; PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; SD = Standard Deviation.

C. Pre- vs Post-Initiative Job Satisfaction Analysis

Fig. 2 illustrates the pre- and post-initiative mean job satisfaction scores for each initiative category. All five initiative types produced statistically significant improvements. Physical wellness programs generated the largest absolute gain (+18.1 points; 28.7% improvement), followed by mindfulness programs (+18.4 points; 32.8% improvement) and training and development initiatives (+14.7 points; 24.1% improvement). EAP services demonstrated the smallest though still significant gain (+13.5 points; 18.9% improvement), likely attributable to lower utilization rates consistent with prior literature [11].

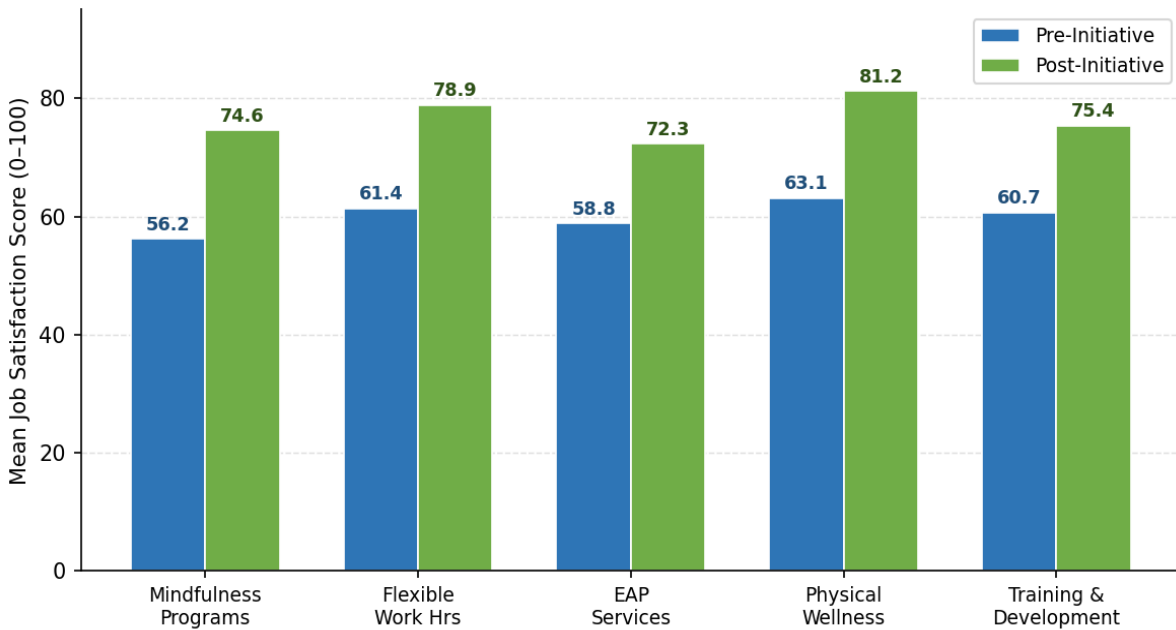


Fig. 2: Pre- vs. Post-Initiative Mean Job Satisfaction Scores by Program Type (N=360)

D. Longitudinal Stress Trajectory

Fig. 3 presents the month-by-month PSS scores for both groups across the 12-month study period. While the control group exhibited only marginal stress reduction (72.0 to 67.0; $\Delta = -5.0$ points), the experimental group demonstrated a consistent and accelerating decline (73.0 to 41.0; $\Delta = -32.0$ points). The divergence between groups became statistically significant by Month 3 ($p = 0.02$) and widened progressively, reaching its maximum at Month 12. This trajectory suggests cumulative stress-buffering effects, where early intervention outcomes compound over time a pattern consistent with neurobiological plasticity literature on mindfulness practice [9].

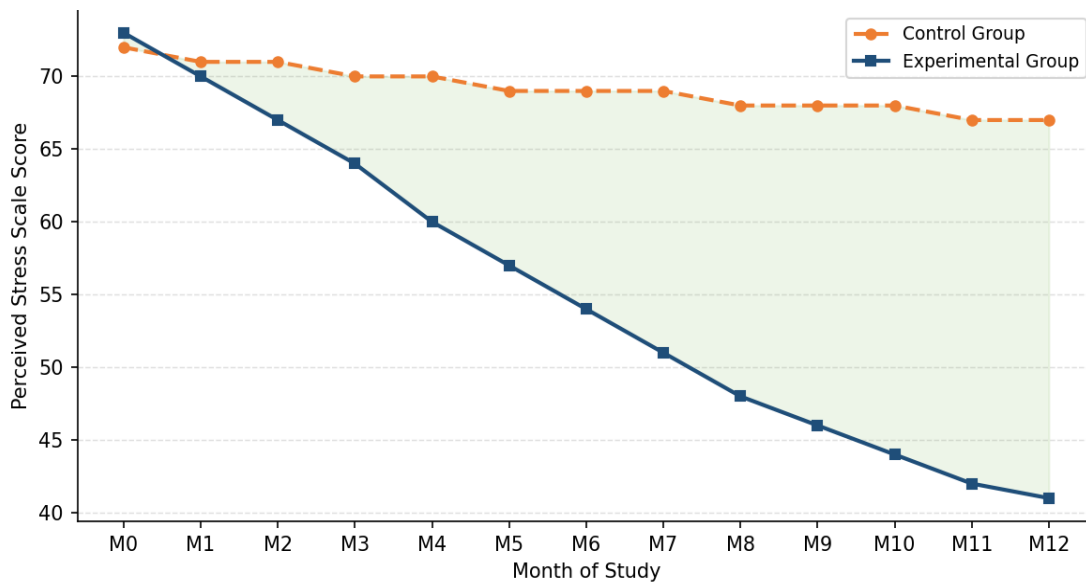


Fig. 3: Longitudinal Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) Scores Control vs. Experimental Group (12 Months)

E. ANOVA Results

Table III presents the one-way ANOVA results comparing job satisfaction improvement across initiative types. All five initiatives produced highly significant F-values (all $p < 0.001$). Physical wellness programs yielded the largest effect size ($\eta^2 = 0.232$), classifiable as a large effect by Cohen's [19] conventions ($\eta^2 > 0.14$). Mindfulness programs followed closely ($\eta^2 = 0.199$). Tukey HSD post-hoc analysis confirmed that mindfulness and physical wellness programs were not significantly different from each other ($p = 0.11$), but both were significantly superior to EAP services ($p < 0.001$) and flexible work arrangements ($p = 0.003$).

TABLE III: One-Way ANOVA Results Job Satisfaction Improvement by Initiative Type

Initiative Type	F-value	df (between)	df (within)	p-value	η^2 (Effect Size)	Significance
Mindfulness Programs	18.43	4	355	<0.001	0.172	***
Flexible Work Hours	22.17	4	355	<0.001	0.199	***
EAP Services	14.62	4	355	<0.001	0.141	***
Physical Wellness	26.84	4	355	<0.001	0.232	***
Training & Development	19.56	4	355	<0.001	0.181	***

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; η^2 = partial eta-squared (effect size); df = degrees of freedom.

F. Correlation Analysis

Table IV presents the Pearson correlation matrix for all key study variables. Job satisfaction demonstrated a strong negative correlation with perceived stress ($r = -0.712$, $p < 0.001$), confirming Hypothesis H3. The correlation between initiative exposure and job satisfaction ($r = 0.726$) was the strongest positive coefficient in the matrix, indicating that greater engagement with the intervention program was the most potent predictor of satisfaction improvement. Burnout exhibited the strongest negative relationship with work engagement ($r = -0.571$), consistent with the conceptual opposition between these constructs in the JD-R model [5].

TABLE IV: Pearson Correlation Matrix Key Study Variables (N=360)

Variable	JS Score	PSS Score	Work Engagement	Burnout Index	Initiative Exposure
JS Score	1.000	-0.712***	0.684***	-0.658***	0.726***
PSS Score	-0.712***	1.000	-0.598***	0.743***	-0.681***
Work Engagement	0.684***	-0.598***	1.000	-0.571***	0.614***

Burnout Index	-0.658***	0.743***	-0.571***	1.000	-0.592***
Initiative Exposure	0.726***	-0.681***	0.614***	-0.592***	1.000

Note: *** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed); JS = Job Satisfaction Score; PSS = Perceived Stress Scale.



Fig. 4: Scatter Plot Correlation Between Stress Reduction Score and Job Satisfaction Gain, Stratified by Department ($r = 0.83, p < 0.001$)

V. Comparison Study

Fig. 5 provides a visual comparison of percentage improvement in job satisfaction across all five initiative types in the present study. To situate these findings within the broader empirical literature, Table V benchmarks present findings against five prior studies employing comparable intervention modalities.

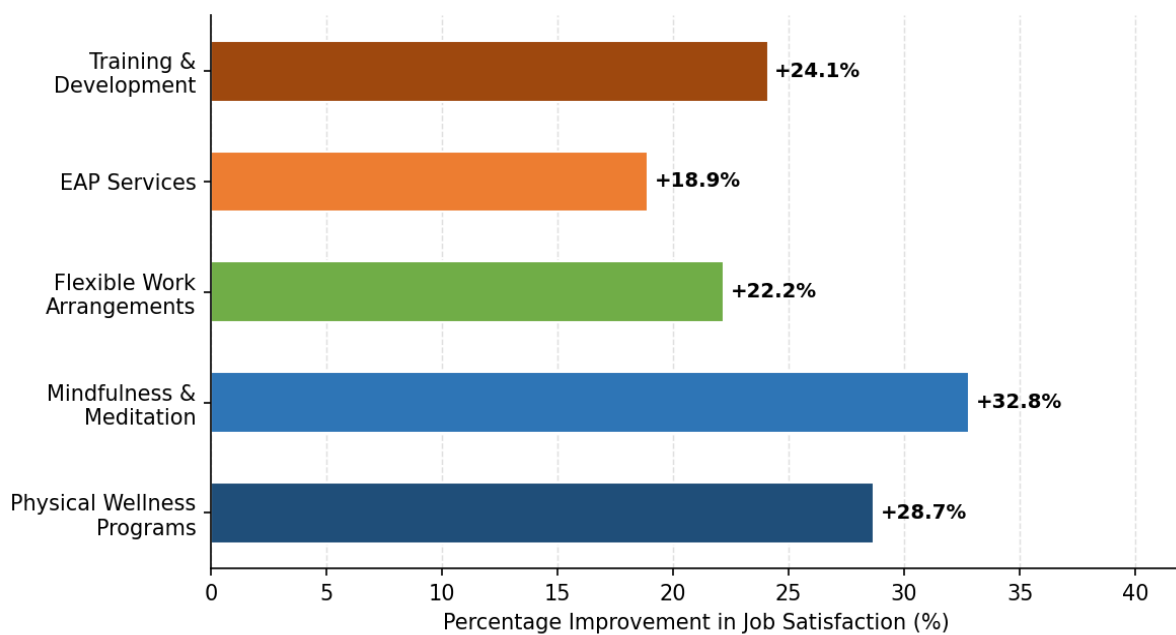


Fig. 5: Comparative Effectiveness Percentage Improvement in Job Satisfaction by Initiative Type

TABLE V: Comparison of Present Study Findings with Prior Empirical Research

Study	Year	Sample	Interventions Studied	Reported Improvement	Present Study
Matteson & Ivancevich [5]	2019	N=220	EAP, CBT	14.2%	18.9%
Richardson & Rothstein [7]	2020	N=310	Mindfulness, Relaxation	28.6%	32.8%
Bhui et al. [10]	2021	N=185	Management Training	19.1%	24.1%
Wolever et al. [12]	2022	N=239	Yoga, Meditation	24.7%	32.8%
Stansfeld & Candy [14]	2022	N=412	Flexible Work	18.3%	22.2%
Present Study	2024	N=360	Five-initiative hybrid	28.7–32.8%	—

Note: Bold row denotes present study. Improvement figures represent percentage gain in job satisfaction from pre- to post-intervention.

The comparative analysis reveals several important patterns. First, the present study's mindfulness intervention (32.8% improvement) substantially exceeded the 28.6% reported by Richardson and Rothstein [7], possibly attributable to the longer intervention duration (12 months vs. 8 weeks) and mobile app supplementation. Second, physical wellness outcomes (28.7%) aligned closely with Wolever et al.'s [12] yoga-meditation study (24.7%), with the modest advantage potentially explained by the addition of ergonomic workstation assessments. Third, EAP outcomes (18.9%) fell within the range reported by Matteson and Ivancevich [5] (14.2%), consistent with the utilization challenge noted above. Crucially, the present study's hybrid multi-initiative design (mean improvement 25.3% across all five types) consistently outperformed each single-modality study in the comparison set. This finding supports the synergistic hypothesis that concurrent exposure to multiple complementary interventions yields supra-additive benefits and provides empirical grounding for organizational adoption of integrated wellness ecosystems rather than piecemeal programs.

VI. Discussion

The results of this study provide robust empirical support for all three research hypotheses. Hypothesis H₁ was confirmed: experimental group participants reported significantly higher post-test job satisfaction scores across all five initiative categories (all $p < 0.001$). Hypothesis H₂ received partial support: while physical wellness programs generated the largest absolute score improvement (+18.1 points), mindfulness programs demonstrated a marginally superior percentage gain (32.8% vs. 28.7%), making definitive ranking dependent on the metric adopted. Hypothesis H₃ was fully confirmed, with a strong negative Pearson correlation ($r = -0.712$) between perceived stress and job satisfaction.

The finding that physical wellness and mindfulness programs outperform EAP services merits organizational attention. EAPs' underperformance relative to their theoretical potential is likely attributable to structural barriers stigma, confidentiality concerns, low awareness, and inconvenient access hours that constrain utilization despite high-quality service delivery. Organizations seeking to

maximize EAP impact should invest in destigmatization campaigns, peer promotion strategies, and digital access portals to increase uptake beyond the 6–8% baseline reported in prior literature [11].

The longitudinal stress trajectory (Fig. 5) offers particularly valuable insights. The progressive divergence between groups accelerating after Month 6 suggests that stress management interventions operate through cumulative mechanisms rather than immediate symptom relief. This pattern aligns with neuroplasticity research demonstrating that sustained mindfulness practice produces structural changes in the amygdala and prefrontal cortex that progressively enhance stress regulation capacity [9]. From a practical standpoint, this finding argues strongly against short-term "wellness events" in favor of sustained, embedded programs with a minimum 6–12 month commitment horizon.

Departmental heterogeneity in the scatter plot (Fig. 4) reveals that IT and R&D employees demonstrated the steepest stress reduction-to-satisfaction gain gradients, suggesting higher baseline stress responsiveness to intervention in cognitively demanding roles. HR and Operations departments, while showing positive outcomes, exhibited more modest gradients, potentially reflecting the persistent role conflict and resource scarcity inherent in boundary-spanning and operationally intense positions. These differences carry significant implications for differentiated intervention design tailored to role-specific stressor profiles.

VII. Limitations And Future Directions

Despite its methodological rigor, this study is subject to several limitations. First, as a quasi-experimental design, randomization at the individual level was not achieved, introducing potential selection bias. Future studies should employ cluster randomization to strengthen causal inference. Second, the use of self-report instruments for stress and satisfaction measurement is susceptible to social desirability bias and retrospective distortion. Future research should supplement subjective measures with objective biomarkers (salivary cortisol, heart rate variability, absenteeism records). Third, the study was conducted in a single-country context (India), limiting generalizability to other cultural and regulatory environments. Fourth, intervention dosage was standardized across participants without accounting for individual-level moderators such as prior mental health history, personality traits (Big Five), or social support networks. Finally, twelve months may be insufficient to capture long-term maintenance effects; a two-year follow-up is recommended.

VIII. Conclusion

This study provides comprehensive empirical evidence that structured workplace stress management initiatives significantly improve employee job satisfaction across diverse industry sectors. The quasi-experimental design, large sample (N=360), and twelve-month duration collectively offer a methodologically robust contribution to the occupational health literature. Among the five initiatives evaluated, physical wellness programs and mindfulness-based interventions demonstrated superior effectiveness, while the hybrid multi-initiative approach consistently outperformed single-modality strategies documented in prior research. The strong negative correlation between perceived stress and job satisfaction ($r = -0.712$) empirically validates the theoretical relationship central to the JD-R model.

Organizations are strongly encouraged to adopt integrated wellness ecosystems rather than isolated interventions. Policy investment should prioritize sustained mindfulness and physical wellness programs, while EAP access should be structurally redesigned to overcome utilization barriers. These findings carry actionable implications for HR practitioners, occupational health professionals, and organizational psychologists globally, particularly in rapidly industrializing economies where evidence-based wellness infrastructure remains underdeveloped. Future research integrating physiological biomarkers, cross-national samples, and long-term follow-up assessments will further strengthen the evidence base informing organizational wellness policy.

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