COMBATING WORKPLACE STRESS & TOXICITY BY INTEGRATING INDIAN ANCIENT ART FORMS: A STUDY ON DELHI-NCR WORKPLACES

Ms. Nisha Bajaj*, Ms. Rableen Kaur** and Dr. Nupur Gosain***

ABSTRACT

Workplace Stress is presently considered the most important concern at the global level that drives researchers to explore diverse perspectives for resolution. Despite employees' familiarity with stress in competitive environments, literature and clinical studies highlight its potential to cause mental health issues, impair performance, and strain interpersonal relations. Indian Cultural Heritage aids in managing workplace stress in modern times. Ancient Indian Art forms like Madhubani, Lippan Art, etc. have emerged as promising solutions for alleviating this pervasive stress.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to integrate the traditional art forms knowledge in managing the contemporary workplace reality. This paper aims to determine the factors of workplace stress & to assess the awareness of Ancient Indian Art Forms among employees of Delhi-NCR. Also, it is a descriptive study that focuses on describing the significance of ancient Indian art forms in building a stress-free workplace and explores the challenges of implementing such art therapy sessions in the workplace.

Research Methodology: This is a descriptive and exploratory study where primary data have been collected to know the reasons for stress among employees & their awareness level related to the importance of implementing Ancient Indian Art Forms as art therapy. For this study, the 5-point Likert scaling questionnaire is being used as a tool which was duly filled by workers of Delhi-NCR. For this study, MS-Excel is being used as a statistical tool for the descriptive analysis.

Findings: The study concludes that there is a lack of awareness among Delhi-NCR employees related to the Indian Art Forms & their significance in healing & mental stress relief. Also, various challenges at the workplace need to be carefully managed by the management in implementing art therapy sessions for employee engagement & talent retention.

Keywords: Workplace Stress, Ancient Indian Art Forms, Awareness, Employees, Stress-Free Environment.

*Research Scholar,

Commerce Department

**Ms. Rableen Kaur

Assistant Professor,

Laxmibai College, Delhi University

***Dr. Nupur Gosain

Assistant Professor

School of Open Learning, University of Delhi

Introduction:

1. Indian Knowledge System

India is glorified with its enriched knowledge and diversity. India is on the path of becoming the Visvaguru – Knowledge Leader by following the sustainable approach & striving for the welfare of all. According to the 2nd Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagarh (ABSS) held in 2023, Thematic Session 15 deals with the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). The aim of IKS was "to scientifically integrate the ancient traditional knowledge to regain a comprehensive knowledge of our heritage & demonstrate the 'Indian Way' of doing things to the entire world."(Thematic Session 15 Indian Knowledge Systems, n.d.)

1.1 India & Ancient Indian Art Forms

Due to the varied culture in India, there has been the existence of various prominent art forms since ages but they have been predominated by Western Art Forms with the advancement of technology.

Ancient art forms depict the cultural heritage of India which needs to be conserved and integrated with the contemporary life of individuals to achieve the aim of ABSS 2023. According to (Kolay, 2016), Indian craft guilds need to be revived & connected with cultural heritage by following critical steps of raising awareness & sharing knowledge, especially among the younger generation.

Art forms include not just colors, paints, or materials rather they serve to express cultural diversity & various social identities (Chakraborty, n.d.). She further explains that the art traces can easily be found back to prehistoric viz. cave paintings which proves the development of ancient human cognition. Since the ages, (Centre for Cultural Resources and Training Ministry of Culture, Government of India New Delhi, 2017) art has been considered to be the medium of communicating emotions and feelings either by tribal communities on diverse surfaces, viz. walls, floors cloth, wood, etc., or by the rural people of India referred to as folk art viz. Madhubani, Warli art, etc.

1.1.1 Prominent Indian Art Forms

Madhubani Painting: The term Madhubani means "forests of honey". Madhubani paintings traced since years. (Ghosh, 2020) earlier, housewives were involved in this to decorate the walls of their homes & later this would provide a way to empower housewives. Symbols used for Madhubani paintings have their significance. According to (Thakur 1981) Elephant, palanquin denotes royalty; Sun and moon represent long life; Goose and peacock are symbols of welfare and calmness.

Mural Art Forms: This art form belonged to the Jharkhand state of India. Mural art forms in Santhal Pargana, Jharkhand,(Rani & Shilpi, 2016) signify cultural heritage preservation and women's empowerment through visual storytelling and community identity expression.

(Source: https://blog.artlounge.in/blog/2021/8/30/indian-art-forms)

Warli Art: Warli Art is the art form that belongs to Maharastra state where the word "Warli" originated from the word "Warla" which means the piece of land. (Patil, 2017)Warli painting represents day-to-day life, its simplicity, and fundamental life principles through its portrayal of human figures, animals, and houses. Renowned for its monochromatic style because of using a single white color against the red earthen backdrop, Warli art vividly portrays the folk life, socio-religious customs, and imaginative beliefs of the community. It helped to be grounded.

Kalamezhuthu: This prominent art form belonged to Kerala state.·(*Indian_paintings_e_41*, n.d.) ritualistic art practiced in temples and sacred groves of Kerala· Representation of deities like Kali and Lord Ayyappa is made on the floor.

1.2 Ancient Art Forms & Stress Management – A Contemporary Viewpoint:

The advent of technology, expansion of commerce & trade, and missions like ViksitBharat led to the rise in competition level. In this competitive era, stress is indispensable & becomes inseparable in the workplace. Stress is

not something under-researched concern. This paper aims to intermingle the ancient art forms in managing contemporary stressful situations; with this, the goal of the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) to safeguard the Indian Cultural Heritage & its implication in the modern era could also be achieved.

Stress has a direct relation to the emotions, thought processes, and physical conditions of a person. Workplace Stress provides a glimpse into the organizational culture & organizational behaviour. It has unfavourable effects on employee health, and performance & may even lead to several behavioural disorders (Renugadevi, 2019).

Workplace stress is exponentially growing in the present era. According to a recent report by the World Health Organization (WHO), 15% of working-age adults have suffered from mental disorders due to workplace stress (https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/promotion-prevention/mental-health-in-the-workplace). (Pandey, 2020) inadequate performance assessment, salary discrepancies, lack of motivation, job insecurity, and challenging work types all negatively impact employee performance. When employees perceive unfair pay, insufficient recognition for good performance, increased workload, and a risky job nature, it leads to heightened stress and declining performance over time. (Salama et al., 2022), the excessive stress experienced by employees heightens their desire to leave their workstations.

According to (Deekshitulu, 2020), the following are some of the effects of stress that may affect an individual's physical health, their mood & even their behavior:

Common effects of stress ...		
On your body	**On your mood**	**On your behavior**
Headache	Anxiety	Overeating or undereating
Muscle tension or pain	Restlessness	Angry outbursts
Chest pain	Lack of motivation or focus	Drug or alcohol abuse
Fatigue	Irritability or anger	Tobacco use
Change in sex drive	Sadness or depression	Social withdrawal
Stomach upset		
Sleep problems		

(Richard, 2002) Stress triggers the physiological responses viz. increased heart rate, altered nerve activities, etc. Also, he mentioned that effective stress management approaches are crucial to reducing the impact of stress, especially chronic stress.

Stress Management Approaches:

There are various contemporary stress management approaches that aid in curing the mental health illness. This paper focuses on the fusion of ancient Indian art culture to aid in managing the modern stressful situations the employees at the workplace. Currently, employees especially youth manage stress inappropriately viz. either start eating more or less, start consuming alcohol, indulging in smoking, behavioral changes, etc. which is not the right way.

According to (Martin et al., 2018), there is a high efficacy of stress prevention with creative art interventions. Further, they mentioned that as per the present time stress-related theories, Creative Arts Therapies (CATs) provide stress prevention & management approaches by utilizing modalities like art, music, dance, etc. (Henderson et al., 2007) concluded that creating mandala art could benefit the individuals experiencing clinical levels of traumatic distress. According to (Deekshitulu, 2020), stress-coping approaches include Meditation, Painting, Music, Classical Dance, Yoga, Mudra, Mantras, Color Therapy & Visualization, and Massage Therapy. Also, he added that there is a significant impact of India's rich cultural heritage on various concerns of society viz. mental illness presentation, diagnosis & management. During COVID-19, the level of stress and anxiety among people was at its peak, various studies have been done and concluded that Warli art can yield good results among persons suffering from higher levels of mental issues.

Thus, this study aims to determine the awareness level of Ancient Indian Art forms among employees of Delhi-NCR. Also, this paper acts as a torchbearer for identifying the challenges in

implementing stress management strategies mainly art therapies and various Indian Art forms.

Limitations

1. Only 36 responses have been collected due to less available time.
2. The responses are limited only to the Delhi-NCR.
3. There is no difference in male & female responses & their awareness level.

2. **Objective:**

In light of Indian Knowledge Systems 2023, the co-integration of ancient culture with the modern knowledge system & contemporary situations is the prerequisite. To implement this policy, this study has the following objective to cope with stress management at the workplace which is a highlighted concern of the present era:

1. To determine the factors that cause stress among employees.
2. To assess the awareness level of various Ancient Indian Art Forms among Employees of Delhi-NCR.

3. To explore the organizational challenges in implementing art therapy sessions in the workplace.

3. Research Methodology:

It is an exploratory & descriptive study based on both primary and secondary sources for data collection. A simple random sampling method has been employed for performing primary research where a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire has been prepared to identify the awareness level of ancient art forms among employees of Delhi-NCR. While various government documents & reports viz. Reports of 2nd Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam, WHO Report etc. have been used as secondary sources for collecting the data. This paper aims to spread awareness of the significance of Indian Ancient Art Forms in Stress Management – A Contemporary Viewpoint. MS Excel has been used as a tool for the analysis of responses.

4. **Data Analysis**

    4.1 **Demographic Analysis**

For this study, primary data has been collected. The demographic analysis of the respondents has been analyzed below-
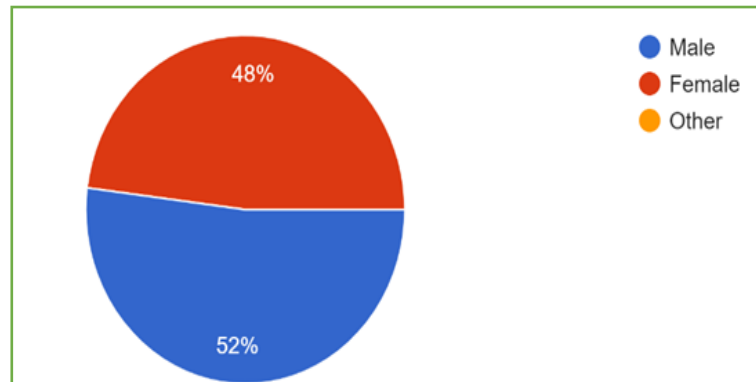
Figure 1: Respondents' Gender Orientation

Figure 1 depicts the gender orientation of the respondents wherein out of the total respondents who participated in this study, 48% were females whereas 52% were male respondents.

Table 1: Age Classification

Age Group (in Years)	Respondents (in %age)
20-30 years	80%
30-40 years	16%
40-50 years	4%
50 & above	0

Table 1 portrays the age classification of the employees where 80% i.e. the majority of the employees belonged to the 20-30 years of age group and 16% of the total employees were from 30-40 years of age group & 4% were from the 40-50 years of age group.

Table 2: Occupational Categorization

Occupation	Respondents (in %age)
Government Sector Employee	8%
Corporate Sector Employee	48%
Banking Sector Employee	0
Teacher/Professor	28%
Other	16%

Table 2 represents the occupational description of respondents. According to that, 48% of respondents were from the Corporate Sector, 28% were teachers/Professors, and 8% belonged to the Government sector.

4.2 Factors that cause stress among employees

Table 3: Factors Causing Stress at the workplace

Description	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Work Culture	9	8	8	4	7
Fear from boss	6	13	6	4	7
Workload	6	13	11	3	3
Equity & Inclusivity	12	13	7	2	2
Lack of group cohesion	7	13	7	2	7
No training & development	11	9	7	5	4
Absence of work-life balance	14	11	2	6	3
Creativity & Innovation	7	14	7	4	4

Table 3 depicts the stressors i.e. those factors that impact the employees' mental health and directly influence their performance & efficiency. Work Culture, fear of boss, workload, equity & inclusivity policies, lack of group cohesion, no proper training & development, absence of work-life balance, & creativity and innovation are some of the prominent determinants that cause stress. As per the responses of the participants, work-life balance is the top factor followed by work culture; fear of the boss; workload, and lack of creativity where the maximum no. of participants responded either as Strongly Agree or Agree.

4.3 Relation between Satisfaction at the Workplace & Workplace Stress

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents related to the Satisfaction attained at Workplace & Workplace Stress

Satisfaction at Workplace	Value	Workplace Stress	Value
Mean	1.80555556	Mean	1.61111111
Standard Error	0.13697088	Standard Error	0.1337955
Median	2	Median	1
Mode	1	Mode	1
Standard Deviation	0.8218253	Standard Deviation	0.80277297
Sample Variance	0.67539683	Sample Variance	0.64444444
Kurtosis	-1.4110729	Kurtosis	-0.8938938
Skewness	0.38446183	Skewness	0.84393074
Range	2	Range	2
Minimum	1	Minimum	1
Maximum	3	Maximum	3
Sum	65	Sum	58
Count	36	Count	36

Table 4 outlines the descriptive statistics to the questions '*Are you satisfied at your workplace?*' and '*Have you ever felt depressed or stressed at the workplace?*' According to the above table, the mean values were 1.805 and 1.611 respectively which depicts the satisfaction attained by

employees and the stress with which employees have suffered at their workplace. The data was less skewed in the case of satisfaction at the workplace than that of the data on workplace stress which means that the data set didn't depict a normal bell-shaped distribution.

4.3.1 Relationship between Satisfaction of Employees at the Workplace & Stress Level at the Workplace

Table 5- Relationship between Satisfaction of Employees at Workplace & Stress Level at Workplace

	Satisfaction at Workplace	*Workplace Stress*
Satisfaction at Workplace	1	-0.245388156
Workplace Stress	-0.245388156	1

There is a common phenomenon that when an employee feels satisfied at their workplace then their stress level automatically decreases. Table 5 shows this as evidence that there is a negative relation that exists between Satisfaction among employees & stress level of -0.245

4.4 Respondents' Awareness Level of the Art Therapies

Table 6: Awareness level of respondents related to Art Therapy

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	13	36%
No	21	59%
Maybe	2	5%

Table 6 represents the awareness level of respondents. As per the data, only 36% of people are aware of the concept of Art Therapy which ultimately implies that people are unaware of the benefits of art therapies. As per the literature, art therapy proved beneficial even for clinical patients with mental illness. 60% of the total respondents were unaware of the concept of art therapies & 5% of people were not sure whether or not they knew the concept of Art Therapy.

4.5 Respondents' Awareness Level of the Ancient Indian Art Forms

*Table 7: Awareness of Prominent Indian Art Forms*

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Only 1 Art form	16	45%
Less than 3 Art Forms	12	32%
Less than 5 Art Forms	4	12%
Aware of all the above-mentioned Art Forms	4	11%

In the questionnaire, only specific prominent ancient Indian art forms were mentioned viz. Lippan Art - From Kutch, Gujarat, Madhubani - From Bihar, Warli Art – Maharashtra, Tanjore Painting - Tamil Nadu, Miniature Painting - Bengal, Jaipur, Bandhani Art – Rajasthan, Murtikala or Pottery Art – Rajasthan.

Table 7 shows that only 11% of people are aware of all these art forms and shockingly, approximately, 77% of respondents were aware of less than 3 art forms which is disappointing to know that people are getting so fussy and over-occupied with their careers and personal life, that they forgot about the Indian Cultural Heritage and its importance. Also, another reason for this could be that the ancient Indian Art forms that depict the Indian cultural heritage have been overshadowed by Western knowledge and approaches. Approximately 12% of total participants have awareness about less than 5 art forms.

4.6 Employees interest in participating or attending

Figure 2: Employees' Perception Towards Art Workshops

- Just to attend the event
- Attend & Participate
- Neither Attend Nor Participate
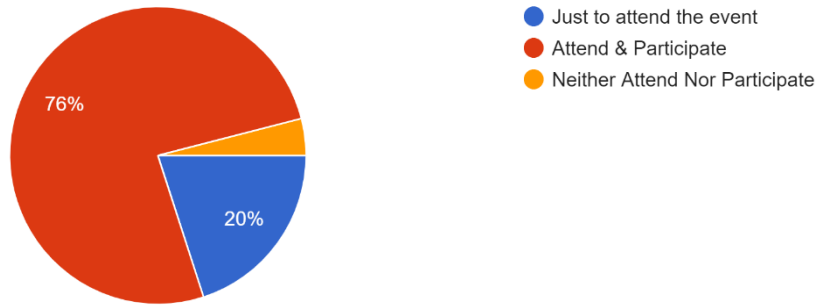
Earlier people were very ambitious which distanced them from their cultural heritage which is the baseline to survive. But due to heavy workload and no work-life balance, people are now aware of the importance of their mental peace & mindfulness. Thus, as per the above pie-chart (*figure 2*), 76% of people are now voluntarily ready to attend and participate in these workshops or therapy sessions if the management would organize any such event in the future. And still, 20% of the total participants were not interested in participating in these workshops, they responded that they just attended them.

4.7 Challenges in Implementing Art Therapies

Table 8: Perception of Employees regarding Challenges to implement Art Therapies

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Organizational Culture	13	36%
Employer Focus: Only to Earn profits & Employee focus: To meet deadlines and earn salary	9	25%
Unwelcome Innovation & Creativity	12	33%
Perception to enhance only required skill & knowledge through Training & Development	13	36%
Such events are considered to be a waste of time	14	37%
Lack of Sense of Belongingness	10	29%
Management is unaware of these art forms & associated benefits that they provide	14	40%

Table 8 depicts the possible challenges that employees perceive to be the bottleneck in organizing art workshops & implementing stress management strategies by way of Indian Ancient Art Forms. 40% of the respondents think that management is unaware of these art therapies & benefits of Indian ancient art forms in curbing workplace stress. 37% of people perceive that their organization would consider it as a waste of time while 36% of people consider organizational culture and perception of training & development as obligations which makes this difficult to as a challenge in implementing such stress management approaches. On the other hand, 33% of people view a lack of creativity & innovation as the challenge to learn & rely on stress through new approaches.

Conclusion

This study concludes that awareness of the various Indian ancient art forms must be embedded in the work culture. Every organization must develop a culture that welcomes creativity & innovation. (Visnola et al., 2010) indicates that art therapy aids in reducing stress and anxiety levels by enhancing self-conception, self-esteem & self-confidence which further helps to develop good communication among team members and enhancement of group cohesion.

WHO explained that all individuals have the right to work in a safe & healthy environment; thus,

WHO in collaboration with the International Labour Organization, developed guidelines and policies to promote mental health at work, prevent conditions & support employees with mental health issues.

Future Scope:

This study provides a further scope to perform a comparative study that can be done by considering occupation as a sole criterion for

In this competitive era, stress might seem to be an inevitable aspect of the workplace but learning to manage and cope with its harmful effects before it toxicates your mind is necessary. Learning & practicing these art forms by involving them in daily routine might be helpful.

employing art therapies for stress management by following different approaches for different types of organizational culture.

References

- Chakraborty, U. (n.d.). Ancient Indian Art-A formal analysis.

- Deekshitulu, P. V. B. (2020). Ancient Indian Methods for Stress Relaxation. Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 11(4), 350–354. https://doi.org/10.5958/2321-5828.2020.00055.8

- Ghosh, S. (2020). Madhubani Painting—Vibrant Folk Art of Mithila. Art and Design Review, 08(02), 61–78. https://doi.org/10.4236/adr.2020.82005

- Henderson, P., Rosen, D., & Mascaro, N. (2007). Empirical study on the healing nature of mandalas. Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 1(3), 148–154. https://doi.org/10.1037/1931-3896.1.3.148

- indian_paintings_e_41. (n.d.).

- Kolay, S. (2016). Cultural Heritage Preservation of Traditional Indian Art through Virtual New-media. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 225, 309–320. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.06.030

- Living-of-Tradition-Tribal-Painting. (n.d.).

- Martin, L., Oepen, R., Bauer, K., Nottensteiner, A., Mergheim, K., Gruber, H., & Koch, S. C. (2018). Creative arts interventions for stress management and prevention-a systematic review. Behavioral Sciences, 8(2). https://doi.org/10.3390/bs8020028

- Pandey, D. L. (2020). Work stress and employee performance: an assessment of impact of work stress. *International Research Journal of Human Resource and Social Sciences*, 7(05), 124-135.

- Patil, D. K. (2017). Warli art: Diversification of traditional painting creating future, hope & happiness. *International Journal of Home Science*, 3(3), 451-456.

- Rani, P., & Shilpi, B. (2016). Rural Women Artists: A Visual Analysis of the Mural Art Forms of Santhal Pargana, Jharkhand, India. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316956917

- Renugadevi, S. (2019). STRESS MANAGEMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PUBLIC SECTOR BANK EMPLOYEES IN TIRUVARUR. International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews. www.ijrar.org

- Salama, W., Abdou, A. H., Mohamed, S. A. K., & Shehata, H. S. (2022). Impact of Work Stress and Job Burnout on Turnover Intentions among Hotel Employees. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19(15). https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19159724

- Salama, W., Abdou, A. H., Mohamed, S. A. K., & Shehata, H. S. (2022). Impact of work stress and job burnout on turnover intentions among hotel employees. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(15), 9724.

- Thakur, U. (2003). *Madhubani painting*. Abhinav Publications.

- Thematic Session 15 Indian Knowledge Systems. (n.d.).

- Visnola, D., Sprudša, D., Arija Baķe, M., & Piķe, A. (2010). Effects of art therapy on stress and anxiety of employees. Proceedings of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, Section B: Natural, Exact, and Applied Sciences, 64(1), 85–91. https://doi.org/10.2478/v10046-010-0020-y https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/promotion-prevention/mental-health-in-the-workplace

- (Source: https://blog.artlounge.in/blog/2021/8/30/indian-art-forms)