

## Adjustment Stress and Coping Strategies Among Indian Young Professionals in Their First Jobs: A Qualitative Literature Review

Khushi B. Jhaveri<sup>1\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Young professionals who transition from college to the workforce experience a critical developmental period, often accompanied by multiple stressors such as high workload, role ambiguity, social adjustment challenges, and navigating organizational expectations. This qualitative literature review explores and synthesizes research on first-job adjustment stress and coping strategies among Indian young professionals. Eight key sources, including empirical studies, literature reviews, and a book chapter, were analyzed to identify major stressors, coping mechanisms, and relevant theoretical frameworks. Findings indicate that key stressors include workload, role ambiguity, and social adjustment challenges, which are often amplified by India's hierarchical workplace structures and cultural expectations around authority. Structured workplace exposure, mentorship, and social support mitigate stress. Critically, gaps remain in understanding the impact of office politics, boundary-setting, and assertiveness in the unique Indian context. This review provides a robust theoretical and practical framework for early-career interventions and highlights essential directions for future research in India.

**Keywords:** *Adjustment Stress, Young Professionals, Coping Strategies, Organizational Psychology, Indian Context*

The transition from college to a professional role represents a significant developmental and psychological milestone. Early-career employees frequently face high workload, unclear role expectations, interpersonal conflicts, and pressure to adapt quickly to organizational culture (Shidhaye et al., 2011; Narayanan et al., 1999). In India, these challenges are amplified by several unique factors, including established hierarchical workplace structures, limited professional autonomy, and distinct cultural expectations around social interactions and authority. These characteristics necessitate a focused analysis, as stress experienced by young Indian professionals often differs in nature and intensity from global findings. Although global research on early-career stress exists, India-specific studies remain limited, particularly outside of healthcare and clerical sectors. This limitation impacts the design of culturally appropriate organizational support.

<sup>1</sup>Independent Researcher, India

\*Corresponding Author

Received: October 02, 2025; Revision Received: October 15, 2025; Accepted: October 19, 2025

## Adjustment Stress and Coping Strategies Among Indian Young Professionals in Their First Jobs: A Qualitative Literature Review

Although global research on early-career stress exists, India-specific studies remain limited, particularly outside healthcare and clerical sectors (Fadilah et al., 2023; Shidhaye et al., 2011). Understanding adjustment stress and coping strategies in the Indian context is crucial for designing supportive organizational interventions, mentoring programs, and training initiatives.

### Research Questions

To address this gap, this qualitative literature review sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the primary adjustment stressors reported by Indian young professionals in their first job?
2. What coping mechanisms and mitigating factors are identified in the literature?
3. Which theoretical frameworks are most applicable for understanding this transition in the Indian workplace?

By synthesizing existing literature, this review identifies key stressors, coping mechanisms, and theoretical frameworks that can inform both research and organizational practice for young Indian professionals in their first jobs.

### METHOD

A qualitative literature review approach was employed. Sources were identified through Google Scholar, ERIC, ResearchGate, SpringerLink, and PubMed using keywords such as “*first job stress India*,” “*early career adjustment India*,” “*workplace stress graduates India*,” “*office politics young professionals India*,” and “*assertiveness workplace India*.”

### Inclusion criteria:

1. Focused on young professionals or graduates in their first job.
2. Addressed workplace stressors, coping mechanisms, or organizational adaptation.
3. Conducted in India or included Indian context.

Both empirical studies and literature reviews were included. Key data extracted included stressors, coping strategies, theoretical frameworks, and cultural context. Themes were organized for synthesis.

### RESULTS / THEMES

#### 1. Workload and Role Stress

Indian early-career employees often experience high workload, role ambiguity, and performance pressure, which can affect mental health and job satisfaction (Shidhaye et al., 2011; Narayanan et al., 1999). The Job Demand-Control Model (Karasek, 1979) and Effort-Reward Imbalance Model (Siegrist, 1996) explain that high job demands with low autonomy or inadequate recognition exacerbate stress.

#### 2. Social Adjustment and Organizational Navigation

Adjusting to workplace culture, interacting with peers, and managing office politics are major stressors. Nehra & Sharma (2017) and Fadilah et al. (2023) found that self-disclosure, social skills, and managerial guidance reduce adjustment stress. Person-Environment Fit Theory (Edwards, 1991) and Social Support Theory (Cohen & Wills, 1985) highlight the buffering effect of supportive relationships and alignment with organizational culture.

# Adjustment Stress and Coping Strategies Among Indian Young Professionals in Their First Jobs: A Qualitative Literature Review

## 3. Coping Strategies

Common coping strategies include relaxation techniques, family support, mentorship, and guided learning (Shidhaye et al., 2011; De Jonge & Dormann, 2017). Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) explain how effective management of internal and external resources mitigates stress.

## 4. Organizational Socialization and Transition

Structured exposure to the workplace, mentoring, and formal training programs improve adjustment (Brown, 1984; Eraut et al., 2003; Biggeri, 2001). Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that observing and modeling workplace behavior supports adaptation.

## 5. Identified Research Gaps

While the literature extensively documents stress from workload and role ambiguity, the specific challenges related to navigating office politics, effectively setting boundaries, and practicing assertiveness in a hierarchical Indian context are critically under-researched. The existing frameworks suggest that while structured support is helpful, the nuance of internal resource management for interpersonal workplace complexity remains largely unexplored.

**Table 1: Summary of Literature on First-Job Adjustment Stress and Coping in India**

Author(s), Year	Population / Context	Method	Key Findings	Theories / Frameworks	Relevance to Current Study
Shidhaye et al., 2011	Anaesthesiologists, India	Survey	High workload, time pressure, and work-life interference; exercise and family support are common coping strategies	Lazarus & Folkman, Conservation of Resources	Illustrates Indian occupational stress and coping strategies, highlighting workload and health-related stressors
Narayanan et al., 1999	Clerical employees, India & US	Survey	Role ambiguity and interpersonal conflict increase stress	Job Demand-Control, Effort-Reward Imbalance	Shows workplace stress specific to Indian context
Nehra & Sharma, 2017	Power sector employees, India	Survey	Self-disclosure correlates with social adjustment; better social skills reduce stress	Person-Environment Fit, Social Support	Highlights importance of social adjustment and communication
Fadilah et al., 2023	Gen Z employees	Literature review	Role ambiguity, communication issues, intergenerational conflicts affect adaptation	Social Learning Theory	Provides insights into first-job adaptation challenges

## Adjustment Stress and Coping Strategies Among Indian Young Professionals in Their First Jobs: A Qualitative Literature Review

Author(s), Year	Population / Context	Method	Key Findings	Theories / Frameworks	Relevance to Current Study
Brown, 1984	College graduates, USA	Survey	Cooperative education leads to higher organizational commitment and job relevance	Social Learning Theory	Structured exposure reduces adjustment stress
Eraut et al., 2003	Nurses, engineers, accountants, UK	Interviews	Informal support and mentoring more important than formal programs; social relationships influence learning	Social Learning Theory	Model for understanding first-job learning and socialization
Biggeri, 2001	University graduates, Italy	Multilevel analysis	Individual and contextual factors affect time to first job	Job Demand-Control	Illustrates transition challenges
De Jonge & Dormann, 2017	Indian workplace	Book chapter	Explains stressors, coping, and organizational adjustment	Multiple	Provides theoretical grounding and India-specific framework

### DISCUSSION

Adjustment stress among Indian first-job employees is driven by workload, role ambiguity, and social adjustment challenges. Coping strategies, social support, and structured workplace guidance mitigate stress. This review highlights that office politics, boundary-setting, and assertiveness remain under-researched areas in India. Theoretical frameworks applied here Job Demand-Control, Effort-Reward Imbalance, Person-Environment Fit, Social Learning, and Transactional Stress models provide a strong lens for understanding these dynamics.

The theoretical frameworks applied here the Job Demand-Control Model, Effort-Reward Imbalance Model, Person-Environment Fit Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Transactional Stress models provide a strong lens for understanding these dynamics. Specifically, the Person-Environment Fit and Social Support Theories reinforce the critical need for robust mentorship programs and organizational socialization activities that foster alignment and supportive relationships.

This review highlights that office politics, boundary-setting, and assertiveness remain critically under-researched areas in the Indian context. Given the culture's emphasis on respect for authority and avoidance of direct conflict, young professionals may particularly struggle with challenging tasks, negotiating responsibilities, or setting work-life boundaries. Future organizational interventions must move beyond general stress management to focus on specific social competency training that equips new employees with the assertiveness and

## Adjustment Stress and Coping Strategies Among Indian Young Professionals in Their First Jobs: A Qualitative Literature Review

boundary-setting skills necessary to navigate India's culturally complex and often hierarchical work environment.

### CONCLUSION

Adjustment stress in Indian first-job employees is multifaceted, driven primarily by workload, role ambiguity, and social adjustment challenges. Effective coping strategies, including the active use of mentorship, social support, and structured workplace exposure, are essential to facilitate successful adaptation.

The findings provide a robust framework for early-career intervention design in India, utilizing models like the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping to build effective internal and external resources. Future research should specifically pivot to focus on office politics, assertiveness, and boundary management within India's unique cultural landscape to design practical, targeted, and highly relevant interventions that support young professionals' long-term well-being and retention.

### REFERENCES

- Biggeri, L. (2001). *A multilevel approach to the analysis of the time to obtain the first job after graduation*. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (Statistics in Society)*, 164(2), 197–212. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrssa/164.2.197>
- Brown, S. J. (1984). *The influence of cooperative education on first job after college* (ERIC Document ED254663). ERIC. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED254663>
- De Jonge, J., & Dormann, C. (2017). Why is my job stressful? Characteristics, process and models of stress at work. In N. Chmiel, F. Fraccaroli, & M. Sverke (Eds.), *An introduction to work and organizational psychology: An international perspective* (3rd ed., pp. 80–97). Wiley-Blackwell. <https://books.google.co.in/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ZdRRDgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA80>
- Eraut, M., Maillardet, F., Miller, C., Steadman, S., Ali, A., Blackman, C., & Furner, J. (2003). *Learning in the first professional job: The first year of full-time employment after college for accountants, engineers, and nurses* (ERIC Document ED477496). ERIC. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED477496>
- Fadilah, M., Utari, P., & Wijaya, M. (2023). *How's the self-concept and adaptation-interaction challenges of Generation Z in the workplace?* Atlantis Press. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/125985167.pdf>
- Narayanan, L., Menon, S., & Spector, P. E. (1999). *A cross-cultural comparison of job stressors and reactions among employees holding comparable jobs in two countries*. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 6, 197–212. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1021986709317>
- Nehra, N., & Sharma, R. (2017). *Relationship understanding between social adjustment and self-disclosure: Results from the Indian power sector*. ResearchGate. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313994775>
- Sarkar, P., & Sinha, S. (2013). *Job stress and hypertension in younger software professionals*. *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 17(3), 30–41. [https://journals.lww.com/ijoe/fulltext/2013/17030/Job\\_stress\\_and\\_hypertension\\_in\\_younger\\_software.4.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/ijoe/fulltext/2013/17030/Job_stress_and_hypertension_in_younger_software.4.aspx)
- Sharma, R., & Sharma, P. (2011). *Evaluation of stressors and coping strategies for occupational stress among Indian professionals* [PDF]. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9ebc/1f548780ab819fb65db583173fd0bc85811d.pdf>

## **Adjustment Stress and Coping Strategies Among Indian Young Professionals in Their First Jobs: A Qualitative Literature Review**

Shidhaye, R., et al. (2011). *Evaluation of stressors and coping strategies for occupational stress among anaesthesiologists in India*. Indian Journal of Anaesthesia, 55(5), 502–509. <https://journals.lww.com/ijaweb/fulltext/2011/55020>

### ***Acknowledgment***

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Jhaveri, K.B. (2025). Adjustment Stress and Coping Strategies Among Indian Young Professionals in Their First Jobs: A Qualitative Literature Review. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(4), 253-258. DIP:18.01.023.20251304, DOI:10.25215/1304.023