



Work Stress and Burnout in Ireland's IT Industry: Evaluating Prevalence and Psychotherapeutic Approaches

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Acknowledgements	2
Abstract	3
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	4
Aim and Objectives.....	5
Scope and Definitions.....	5
Chapter 2: Burnout: Establishing the Irish IT Sector Context	7
Defining Work-Related Stress and Burnout.....	7
Global and Irish Prevalence and Impact.....	8
The Irish IT Sector: Unique Stressors and Dynamics.....	8
Current Workplace Well-being Landscape in Ireland.....	10
Chapter 3: Reviewing Psychotherapy-Informed Interventions	12
Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT).....	12
Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs).....	13
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).....	13
Integrative/Psychodynamic Approaches.....	14
Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs).....	15
Overall Evaluation and Limitations.....	17
Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion	18
Implications.....	19
Strengths and Limitations of the Dissertation.....	20
Recommendations for Future Research.....	21
References	22

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Abstract

Work-related stress and burnout represent significant challenges within the demanding Irish Information Technology (IT) sector. This library-based dissertation explores the application and evaluates the evidence for psychotherapy-informed interventions in mitigating these issues within this specific context. The review establishes the high prevalence and impact of stress and burnout, driven by factors including intense pressure, job insecurity, and remote work challenges unique to the sector. An evaluation of individual-level interventions (such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Interventions, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and Employee Assistance Programmes) indicates varied effectiveness, primarily for stress and exhaustion. They appear to have a limited impact on cynicism or professional efficacy and significant dependency on organisational context. Findings reveal a gap between systemic workplace stressors and the focus of individual interventions. It is concluded that while psychotherapy-informed approaches offer valuable individual coping tools, more research in the area is needed about integrated strategies combining individual support with organisational-level changes addressing psychosocial safety are essential for sustainable well-being in the Irish IT industry.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The contemporary workplace, while offering professional advancement, presents significant challenges to psychological well-being. Work-related stress and the syndrome of burnout are increasingly prevalent global issues. A substantial rise in daily work-related stress has been observed, with 41% of employees reporting significant stress levels in 2024 (Gallup, 2024; World Health Organization, 2019). This trend signifies a growing international concern; the World Health Organization (2019) classified burnout as an "occupational phenomenon" directly resulting from unmanaged chronic workplace stress.

The escalation of work-related stress yields considerable consequences for both individual health and organisational effectiveness (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2014). Manifestations include elevated employee absenteeism, presenteeism (attending work while unwell and underperforming), and increased staff turnover, collectively imposing significant economic burdens (Cullinan et al., 2019). Furthermore, work-related stress is recognised as a notable contributor to mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression (American Psychological Association, 2018). It also increases the risk of physical health problems, including cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal disorders (European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2022).

Ireland, despite hosting multinational corporations often recognised for employee benefits (Morgan McKinley, 2021), is not immune to this trend. Elevated levels of work-related stress are frequently reported among Irish employees (Harnett & Kieran, 2020), particularly evident within the dynamic Information Technology (IT) and broader corporate sectors (Cullinan et al., 2019). The IT industry is characterised by rapid innovation cycles, intense competition, and a demanding work culture (Natalie, 2024, Yerbo, 2022), placing unique pressures on its workforce and contributing to heightened stress and burnout rates (ISACA, 2025). Extended working hours, stringent deadlines, rapid skill evolution, and the constant pressure to innovate cultivate a highly stressful environment for IT professionals (ISACA, 2025). Recent large-scale layoffs in the global tech industry and intensified competition, particularly regarding artificial intelligence advancements, may further amplify these pressures (Muir, 2023).

The personal and economic repercussions of work-related stress and burnout are substantial (Bagnall et al., 2016). Increasing prevalence and heightened stressors like high-intensity work (ISACA, 2025) and emerging uncertainties such as AI and job security, underscores the need for effective interventions within the Irish corporate landscape, particularly the IT sector (ISACA 2025, Yerbo, 2022). Organisations are increasingly observed seeking mental health solutions (Bourke et al., 2023), while individuals demand more mental health support services (VHI, 2023).

Despite this growing awareness, a critical gap persists concerning the implementation and evaluation of evidence-based practices specifically addressing workplace mental health (Kelloway, 2017). Kelloway (2017) argued that the mere presence of interventions should not be equated with effective, empirically supported strategies. This dissertation seeks to address this gap by synthesising existing literature.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the application and evaluate the evidence base for psychotherapy-informed interventions in mitigating work-related stress and burnout within the Irish IT and technology sector, based on existing literature and publicly available resources.

This aim will be achieved through the following objectives:

- To review the prevalence, key drivers, and impact of work-related stress and burnout specifically within the Irish IT and technology sector, drawing upon available research, reports, and theoretical models.
- To critically evaluate the evidence for the selected individual-level psychotherapy-informed interventions (including Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Mindfulness-Based Interventions, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, other relevant modalities, and Employee Assistance Programmes) in addressing work-related stress and burnout.

Scope and Definitions

This library-based study relies exclusively on existing literature, reports, and publicly available data; no primary data

collection was undertaken. The focus is on the potential of psychotherapy and psychotherapy-informed perspectives in addressing work-related stress and burnout.

- **Work-Related Stress:** Defined as a physiological and psychological response occurring when perceived job demands exceed perceived coping abilities (Health and Safety Executive, n.d.), often arising from high demands coupled with low resources or control (Economic and Social Research Institute et al., 2018).

- **Burnout:** Defined per the ICD-11 as a syndrome from chronic, unmanaged workplace stress, characterised by: 1) exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance, negativism, or cynicism towards one's job; and 3) reduced professional efficacy (World Health Organization, 2019; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). It is considered a specific occupational phenomenon (World Health Organization, 2019).

- **IT Sector / Tech Industry:** Used interchangeably for companies and employees in software, hardware, IT services, telecommunications, and related fields in Ireland.

- **Psychotherapy:** Foundational knowledge is assumed; specific modalities will not be detailed here.

For clarity in reviewing literature "work-related stress" and "burnout" will be discussed together and interchangeably for the scope of this dissertation. The primary focus is on individual-level interventions, but the importance of the organisational context is acknowledged throughout.

Limitations include reliance on secondary data and potential scarcity of research focused specifically on psychotherapy-informed interventions within the Irish IT sector.

Chapter One provides this introduction, background, rationale, aim, objectives, scope, and definitions. Chapter Two reviews the context of work-related stress and burnout in the Irish IT sector. Chapter Three evaluates individual-level psychotherapy-informed interventions. Chapter Four discusses and synthesises these findings, acknowledges limitations, provides conclusions, and suggests future research directions.

Chapter 2: Burnout: Establishing the Irish IT Sector Context

This chapter establishes the context surrounding work-related stress and burnout. It defines these phenomena, examines their prevalence and impact globally and within Ireland, gives specific attention to the Irish IT and technology sector's unique pressures and workforce dynamics, and reviews the current landscape of workplace well-being initiatives in Ireland. This context is essential for evaluating the interventions discussed subsequently.

Defining Work-Related Stress and Burnout

Work-related stress is understood as a response occurring when perceived job demands exceed an individual's perceived resources or coping abilities (Health and Safety Executive, n.d.; Economic and Social Research Institute et al., 2018). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model conceptualises this, positing that high job demands (aspects requiring sustained effort) combined with low job resources (aspects functional in achieving goals or reducing demands) increase the risk of strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Burnout is classified in the ICD-11 as an occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic, unmanaged workplace stress (World Health Organization, 2019). It is distinct from general stress and characterised by three dimensions: 1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance from one's job (negativism or cynicism); and 3) reduced professional efficacy or sense of accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2016; World Health Organization, 2019). This syndrome develops in response to prolonged exposure to demanding occupational conditions (Bagnall et al., 2016). Key drivers include excessive workload, lack of control, insufficient reward, breakdown of community, lack of fairness, and value conflicts (Maslach & Leiter, 2008), with emotional exhaustion often considered the central component (Russell et al., 2018; Maslach et al., 2001).

Both work-related stress and burnout are associated with significant negative outcomes for individuals and organisations. These include increased rates of absenteeism, higher employee turnover intentions, reduced productivity

and job satisfaction, adverse physical and mental health outcomes, and increased healthcare utilisation and costs (Bagnall et al., 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2009).

Global and Irish Prevalence and Impact

Globally, work-related stress is a significant concern. Gallup (2024) reported 41% globally experienced daily stress, while WHO (2024) estimates 12 billion workdays lost annually. This loss represents an approximate cost of US\$1 trillion in productivity to the global economy each year.

Ireland mirrors these global trends. Eurostat (2020) data indicated a 140% surge in work problems related to stress, depression, and anxiety since 2007. Aligning with the global average, recent Gallup (2024) research found 41% of Irish employees experience significant daily stress. Health and Safety Authority (HSA) funded research showed reported work-related stress among Irish workers rose from 8% in 2010 to 17% in 2015 (Russell et al., 2018).

The OECD (2018) estimated the annual cost of mental ill-health at approximately €8.2 billion. Workplace stress drives absenteeism; the CIPD (2018) found 20% of Irish organisations saw increased annual absenteeism, with over 44% attributing the rise to stress. Research from Cork University Business School indicated over half of Irish employers observed absenteeism due to mental health reasons (Bourke et al., 2023). The Healthy Ireland at Work Framework (2021-2025) identifies stress as a key contributor, with 42% of organisations citing it as a common cause of medically certified absence (Department of Health, 2021). Employers acknowledge the impact, with 64% stating absenteeism adversely affects business performance (Bourke et al., 2023). Furthermore, Irish employees reporting work-related stress, anxiety, or depression were significantly more likely to have absences of four days or more (Cullinan et al., 2019). Presenteeism is also prevalent, reported by 27% of Irish firms, exceeding the 21% reported in England (Bourke et al., 2023). UK data provides cost context, estimating poor employee mental health costs employers £2,646 per employee annually (Deloitte, 2022).

The Irish IT Sector: Unique Stressors and Dynamics

The IT and technology sector is vital to the Irish economy, contributing roughly 18% of GVA in 2021 and accounting for 15.2% of the labour share in 2023 (Conefrey et al., 2023). It employed 164,600 individuals directly by late 2022 (Central Statistics Office, 2017). Many of Ireland's top corporations are in this sector, contributing over half of all corporate tax revenue since 2020 (Conefrey, 2023). Given this economic significance, widespread stress or burnout within this workforce could pose broader risks to national economic stability. Therefore, understanding the specific dynamics within this sector is crucial.

While specific prevalence data for stress and burnout within the Irish IT sector is limited, international studies provide insights. Research involving European technology professionals found 80% reported high stress, primarily linked to heavy workloads (ISACA, 2025). Anecdotal findings from Irish industry publications and online forums also suggests burnout is a significant concern: *"Tech worker burnout is reaching alarming levels"* (Darmody, 2022). A Workhuman survey found that Ireland ranks among the worst in Europe for employee burnout, with three in ten employees reporting being burnt out "very often" or "always." Irish workers are also among the most likely in Europe to report high daily stress and worry, further underscoring the prevalence of burnout in the sector (Leonard, 2022)

Several inherent factors likely contribute to heightened stress and burnout in the Irish tech sector based on the factors that drive burnout.

- **High-Pressure Environment:** Constant technological innovation, intense market competition, and demanding project deadlines create inherent pressure (ISACA, 2025; Yerbo, 2022). Long working hours (>40/week for many) are common, often with expectations of unpaid overtime (Carroll, 2005; Bobek & Wickham, 2015), and many professionals report difficulty relaxing post-work (Yerbo, 2022)." Similarly for remote work stats.

- **Work-Life Boundaries:** Remote and hybrid work, while flexible, can blur professional and personal boundaries, challenging work-life balance (Roor, 2024; Tech Burnout, n.d.). Ireland has the second-highest frequency of working from

home in Europe (Eurofound, 2025). High remote work rates correlate with increased after-hours work engagement (e.g., 81% checking emails, 48% working beyond hours), contributing to burnout risk (TravelPerk, 2024; Brennan, 2024).

- **Continuous Learning Demands:** Rapid technological evolution necessitates constant learning and upskilling, adding significant cognitive load (Tech Burnout, n.d.). Uncertainty surrounding AI's future impact on job roles may add further pressure (Psico Smart, n.d.)

- **Workforce Dynamics:** The sector relies heavily on international talent (approx. 33% non-Irish nationals, Conefrey, 2023).

- **Industry Instability:** Recent large-scale global layoffs by major tech companies with significant Irish operations (150,000 across 549 companies in 2024 and 22,000 so far in 2025, Park 2025) across major tech companies like Meta, Microsoft and Google exacerbate job insecurity and contribute to a climate of uncertainty. One of the largest burnout surveys in the IT sector conducted to date found over 40% felt less engaged, with 25% not seeing value in their work (Yerbo, 2022).

These factors align with different theoretical models that were explained previously. For example, based on the JD-R burnout model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), where high demands (workload, cognitive load, uncertainty) coupled with potentially low control (job security) or resources (support during change, integration assistance) heighten stress and burnout risk. Similarly, long working hours and difficulty to detach may lead to exhaustion, which is one of the main burnout elements based on Salanova's (2005) four dimensions of burnout theory.

Current Workplace Well-being Landscape in Ireland

Growing recognition of the costs of work-related stress prompts efforts from government, regulators, and employers in Ireland (Bourke et al., 2023; Vhi, 2023). The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 legally obliged employers to protect employees from mental health injury arising from work factors like stress (Health and Safety Authority, n.d.). The HSA provides guidance on managing psychosocial risks (Department of Health, 2021; Health Service Executive [HSE], 2023). The Healthy Ireland at Work framework (2021-2025) promotes structured, evidence-based approaches (Healthy

Ireland, n.d.), and reviews emphasize evidence-informed interventions (Murphy et al., 2018).

Despite this framework, a gap between awareness and action persists. While most Irish employers (76%) acknowledge responsibility for employee mental health, implementation of concrete supports lags behind regions like England (Bourke et al., 2023). Fewer Irish firms reported having a dedicated mental health plan (23% vs 31%), a board-level lead (32% vs 43%), or active well-being monitoring (22% vs 44%) (Bourke et al., 2023). Furthermore, only 20% allocated a dedicated budget for mental health initiatives, despite 76% acknowledging responsibility (Bourke et al., 2023).

Effective implementation faces challenges, including lack of strategic integration (initiatives as standalone programs), insufficient focus on systemic stressors, difficulties with communication and engagement, tailoring interventions to diverse needs, and inadequate evaluation methods (Quigley et al., 2021).

This chapter established the significant context of work-related stress and burnout in Ireland, with a specific focus on the economically vital IT sector. Key pressures identified include the demanding pace, work-life boundary issues amplified by high remote work rates, continuous learning needs, industry instability driving job insecurity, and potential integration challenges for a large non-Irish workforce. These factors align with theoretical drivers of burnout involving high demands and potentially insufficient resources or control. While national frameworks for workplace well-being exist, implementation gaps remain. This complex interplay of sector-specific stressors and limitations in current approaches underscores the need to evaluate specific interventions capable of addressing these challenges. The following chapter will critically examine the evidence for individual-level psychotherapy-informed interventions in this context.

Chapter 3: Reviewing Psychotherapy-Informed Interventions

This part examines the empirical support for selected individual psychotherapy-based interventions frequently proposed or employed to mitigate work-related stress and burnout. The psychological underpinnings of stress and burnout provide a rationale for applying therapeutic principles to enhance coping and well-being (Bagnall et al., 2016; Harvey, 2014). Given that a significant proportion of workplace interventions target the individual (Ahola et al., 2017), a critical examination of their effectiveness is warranted.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT) operates on the principle of a strong interplay between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (Chand et al., 2025). It has been extensively investigated as an intervention for work-related stress (Maricuțoiu et al., 2016). Numerous meta-analyses and systematic reviews lend support to its effectiveness in reducing psychological stress symptoms. Significant reviews have reported moderate to large effect sizes for CBT interventions on various measures of psychological stress (Alin et al., 2011; Van der Klink et al., 2001; Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). Notably, Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), a specific form of CBT focusing on identifying and challenging irrational beliefs, was suggested by one review to be particularly efficient (David & Szamoskozi, 2011). These findings are consistent with reports from various national contexts, including Ireland, the UK, and Austria, which identify CBT as among the more effective individual interventions for mitigating work-related stress (Murphy et al., 2018, Bagnall et al., 2016; Harvey, 2014). One report noted that CBT interventions were associated with an average earlier return to work of 65 days for individuals on related sick leave (Harvey, 2014).

However, its impact specifically on the multifaceted syndrome of burnout requires careful evaluation. While CBT effectively equips individuals with stress management and coping strategies, evidence suggests its primary benefit for burnout may be limited mainly to alleviating the emotional exhaustion dimension. Meta-analytic findings indicate only small effects on exhaustion and negligible effects on the core components of cynicism (depersonalization) and reduced

professional efficacy (personal accomplishment) (Maricuțoiu et al., 2016). A systematic review of RCTs also found that CBT interventions did not consistently alleviate overall burnout symptoms (Ahola et al., 2017). Therefore, while valuable for stress reduction, CBT's capacity to address the full burnout syndrome appears less comprehensive, potentially targeting symptoms more than the complete phenomenon.

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs)

Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) typically involve formal mindfulness practices such as meditation, body scan exercises, and mindful movement to cultivate present moment awareness and acceptance (Virgili, 2015). Meta-analytic evidence indicates a significant positive effect of MBIs on reducing psychological distress, with Virgili (2015) and Sedlmeier et al. (2012) reporting similar effect sizes across various types of meditation and MBIs. Virgili (2015) also found that these benefits were largely maintained at a median follow-up of 5 weeks. A systematic review by Catapano et al. (2023) corroborated the short-term effectiveness of MBIs in reducing levels of burnout, stress, and anxiety, and in improving the quality of life among healthcare professionals. Notably, Virgili (2015) found limited evidence suggesting that MBIs are more effective than other stress management techniques like relaxation training and yoga for reducing psychological distress in working adults.

Critically evaluated, MBIs appear effective for general psychological stress and the emotional exhaustion component of burnout (Catapano et al., 2023). Similar to CBT, their impact on cynicism and reduced efficacy is less consistently demonstrated (Maricuțoiu et al., 2016). Furthermore, questions arise regarding the longevity of effects beyond the immediate post-intervention period, with some longitudinal studies indicating benefits may not be sustained without ongoing practice or support (Catapano et al., 2023). In summary, MBIs offer an empirically supported approach comparable to other stress management techniques, primarily impacting distress and exhaustion, but further research is needed regarding comprehensive burnout impact and long-term sustainability.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) promotes psychological flexibility by encouraging individuals to accept challenging thoughts and feelings while committing to actions aligned with their values (Flaxman & Bond, 2010). ACT has emerged as a promising intervention for reducing stress and burnout by focusing on psychological flexibility rather than direct symptom reduction (Puolakanaho et al., 2020). Puolakanaho et al. (2020) developed an eight-week ACT-based program and found that its addition to usual occupational health care services yielded significant benefits compared to treatment-as-usual, with reductions in burnout, stress, and psychological symptoms, and improvements in general well-being and workability sustained over a 12-month follow-up. Catapano and et al.'s (2023) systematic review also found ACT effective in reducing anxiety and emotional exhaustion and in increasing life satisfaction and personal accomplishment in healthcare workers, with these effects maintained at 3 and 12-month follow-ups.

The focus of ACT on psychological flexibility and values appears theoretically well-suited to addressing burnout components like cynicism and reduced accomplishment, alongside exhaustion (Puolakanaho et al., 2020). The available evidence suggests potential for sustained positive effects (Catapano et al., 2023). However, direct comparative studies against other established interventions are also scarce, this makes it difficult to differentiate ACT's impact compared to other interventions like MBIs (Puolakanaho et al., 2020). While promising, particularly given its focus on values and acceptance which may resonate with navigating uncertainty, more research is needed to establish its relative efficacy and applicability across different workplace contexts. In addition, the available body of research specifically investigating ACT for burnout does not have a scope of diverse occupational sectors, including IT. Therefore, its effects on other sectors and on IT professionals remains relatively unknown. Future research should prioritise comparative RCTs and investigate factors influencing ACT's effectiveness in various settings.

Integrative/Psychodynamic Approaches

While the body of research directly linking integrated psychotherapy and psychoanalysis to burnout is limited, exploring

their potential contributions based on their established effects on related constructs is valuable.

Long-term follow-ups of psychoanalysis (up to 25 years) have demonstrated improvements in self-awareness and adaptive coping mechanisms (Gaskin, 2016), as well as sustained reductions in anxiety symptoms (Shedler, 2010). Considering the cynicism and emotional exhaustion components of burnout, these long-term gains in self-understanding and coping could potentially contribute to burnout prevention and management over time.

Similarly, integrative psychotherapy has shown efficacy in reducing anxiety (Zarbo et al., 2016), providing tools for managing emotional exhaustion and coping with stressors (IAHIP, n.d.), and enhancing overall well-being (Gislon et al., 2023). While not directly focused on burnout, these outcomes may indicate that an integrative approach, tailored to the individual's specific needs and drawing from various therapeutic modalities, could address the complex interplay of factors contributing to work-related stress and burnout.

Although direct research on the effect of group therapy on burnout is not exhaustive, studies on work-related mental disorders offer relevant insights. Hondong et al. (2023) found that a work-related group therapy program significantly reduced symptoms of depression, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, a key component of burnout. Stier-Jarmer et al. (2016) demonstrated that a 3-week outpatient program including group-based stress management interventions was effective in reducing perceived stress and emotional exhaustion, and improving well-being in the short to medium term. Furthermore, combining different intervention techniques within a group setting appears promising. Catapano et al.'s (2023) review found mindfulness-based interventions, often delivered in groups, effective in the short term for reducing burnout and improving quality of life in healthcare professionals. Montaner et al.'s (2022) RCT showed that group-based Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) reduced anxiety and emotional exhaustion and increased life satisfaction and personal accomplishment in healthcare workers. While group therapy appears beneficial for emotional exhaustion and general stress, its impact on other burnout dimensions like depersonalization/cynicism and personal accomplishment is less consistently reported (Maricuțoiu et al., 2016)

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are workplace sponsored, individual intervention programs designed to identify and assist employees with personal concerns, including health, emotional, stress, or other personal problems that may adversely affect job performance (Nunes et al., 2018). Many companies have introduced EAPs in Ireland as a support mechanism for employees to mitigate the risks associated with stress. These programs often offer services such as counselling and aim to provide a confidential avenue for employees to seek help (O’Keeffe, 2015).

The literature suggests that EAPs can have a beneficial impact on employee well-being and related outcomes. Research has indicated a significant reduction in psychological distress following EAP intervention (Bouzikos et al., 2022). Furthermore, EAPs have been linked to increased productivity, engagement, life satisfaction, and reduced absenteeism and workplace distress (Bouzikos et al., 2022). One study utilizing a well-matched control group found a steeper decline in sick leave usage for EAP users compared to non-users, estimating 4.8 to 6.5% fewer hours lost per month due to illness (Nunes et al., 2018). This suggests that EAPs can be an efficient mechanism for addressing issues that contribute to absenteeism, which can be linked to burnout and work-related stress (O’Keeffe, 2015).

However, a critical evaluation reveals several limitations and challenges associated with EAPs. Reviews have noted the absence of comprehensive evaluation studies to definitively measure the actual impact of EAPs on an organization. This difficulty in evaluation is compounded by the lack of an agreed standardized definition of an EAP and the services offered (O’Keeffe, 2015). Moreover, a qualitative study of EAP practitioners highlighted substantial barriers for EAPs to engage employers in primary prevention related to workplace stress, including concerns about confidentiality and stigma and concerns about contract vulnerability (Nobrega et al., 2010; European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2024). Moreover, EAPs effectiveness appears significantly moderated by the existing organisational Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) which suggests they work better where support already exists rather than creating it (Bouzikos et al., 2022). The other argument that researchers criticize EAPs is that they predominantly target individual coping, often failing to address the root organisational stressors causing widespread issues, thereby potentially shifting responsibility onto the

employee (Kirk & Brown, 2003; Nobrega et al., 2010)

In summary, while providing a potentially valuable support resource for individuals, EAPs are generally considered insufficient on their own to address systemic work-related stress and burnout due to their primary focus on individual adaptation rather than organisational prevention or change (Nobrega et al., 2010)

Overall Evaluation and Limitations

Since burnout is characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy often stemming from prolonged workplace stress, a reduction in stress, anxiety, and sickness absence could indicate a positive impact of individual therapy modalities and EAP-like interventions on mitigating these factors (Joyce et al., 2016). The reviewed individual-level interventions present distinct profiles. CBT and MBIs show robust evidence for managing general stress and the exhaustion component of burnout, but less consistent impact on cynicism or efficacy, with questions about long-term effects for MBIs (Ahola et al., 2017; Virgili, 2015). ACT emerges as promising for fostering psychological flexibility and potentially impacting multiple burnout dimensions with sustained effects, though requiring further research across sectors like IT (Puolakanaho et al., 2020). EAPs offer accessible support but are limited by their individual focus and context dependency (Bouzikos et al., 2022). A critical theme across the literature is that the success of individual interventions is significantly influenced by the broader organisational environment (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008; Bouzikos et al., 2022). Stressors prevalent in the Irish IT sector, such as high workload, job insecurity, and work-life boundary issues, may be partially buffered by individual coping skills enhanced through these interventions, but are unlikely to be resolved without addressing the underlying organisational factors. This highlights the probable limitations of relying solely on individual-focused approaches within this demanding context.

This critical evaluation of individual interventions sets the stage for the subsequent discussion, which will further synthesise these findings in relation to the specific challenges of the Irish IT sector.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion

This final chapter synthesises the findings from the preceding literature review to address the dissertation's aim: exploring the application and effectiveness of psychotherapy-informed interventions for work-related stress and burnout within the Irish IT and technology sector. It interprets the evidence on interventions (Chapter 3) considering the specific contextual pressures identified (Chapter 2), discusses implications for key stakeholders, acknowledges the study's limitations, proposes future research directions, and offers concluding remarks.

The literature review established that work-related stress and burnout are significant issues within the Irish IT sector. The review highlighted emerging dynamics in the Irish IT sector (including intense pressure, demanding workloads, remote work challenges, continuous learning needs, and job insecurity) that potentially contribute to various burnout dimensions and heighten overall risk. The evaluation of individual-level interventions indicated that while approaches like CBT, MBIs, and ACT offer valuable tools, particularly for managing stress and exhaustion, their effectiveness in addressing the full burnout syndrome (including cynicism and reduced efficacy) varies, and their impact is significantly moderated by organisational context. Similarly, while EAPs may offer individual support and show some positive outcomes particularly in supportive climates (Bouzikos et al., 2022), they are often criticised for not addressing root organisational causes (Kirk & Brown, 2003; Nobrega et al., 2010).

Connecting these findings reveals two important gaps. Firstly, the significant economic importance of the IT sector and the high cost associated with burnout contrast sharply with an identified lack of sector-specific research and targeted intervention focus, particularly within small and medium-sized companies. Secondly, there is a potential gap between the nature of the stressors in the Irish IT sector and the primary focus of individual interventions. While CBT or MBI might enhance coping with task pressure, and ACT could foster psychological flexibility amidst uncertainty (Puolakanaho et al., 2020), these interventions primarily target individual responses. They are less equipped to directly alter systemic issues like excessive workloads driven by organisational culture, pervasive job insecurity stemming from industry volatility (Park, 2025), or blurred boundaries reinforced by work practices. The limitations of EAPs, particularly their

individual focus and context dependency (Bouzikos et al., 2022), further highlight that relying solely on individual support mechanisms is unlikely to be sufficient in this demanding environment. An integrated approach, addressing both individual coping and organisational factors influencing psychosocial safety, appears essential for sustainable well-being (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008).

Maslach et al. (2001) concluded that interventions aimed at improving individual coping strategies for burnout are relatively ineffective at the workplace and recommended organisational change alongside individual interventions. The literature argues that organisational interventions in the workplace may be more effective than individual interventions alone (Bagnall et al., 2016).

Implications

The synthesis yields several implications for different stakeholders:

For Therapists: Several implications arise for practitioners working with clients from the Irish IT sector. They should be cognisant of the industry-specific stressors (high demands, instability, remote work issues). Regardless of their primary discipline, an integrative therapeutic approach may bring the more efficient results as the evidence-based individual techniques (CBT, ACT, MBI) form the basis of intervention. On the other hand, awareness of potential cultural adjustment stressors for non-Irish nationals is also important since the non-Irish share of the workforce is the highest compared to the other sectors (Conefrey, 2023).

For Corporations/Organisations: Given that most Irish corporations (Bourke et al., 2023, reported 76% acknowledge responsibility) acknowledge responsibility on employees mental health; a primary implication is the need to accelerate action to close the gap between the awareness and action taken. Relying solely on individual interventions like EAPs is insufficient for addressing systemic drivers of stress and burnout. A strategic commitment to improving the Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) is paramount. This involves proactive measures such as managing workloads effectively, providing adequate resources, fostering supportive leadership and team dynamics, ensuring procedural fairness, promoting clear

work-life boundaries (especially in remote settings), and offering specific support during organisational change or instability. Integrating organisational-level changes (primary prevention) with accessible individual support (secondary/tertiary intervention) is key. Adopting evidence-based practices, as advocated by Kelloway (2017), requires a holistic approach encompassing prevention, intervention, and accommodation. Furthermore, robust evaluation of implemented initiatives is necessary (Brunton et al., 2016).

For Individuals Experiencing Burnout: Burnout is an occupational phenomenon, not a personal failing (World Health Organization, 2019). Utilizing available supports like EAPs can be a first step, but understanding their limitations is also important. Accessing evidence-based therapeutic support can provide valuable coping skills.

Strengths and Limitations of the Dissertation

This dissertation addresses a gap by providing a focused review of psychotherapy-informed interventions within the specific context of the Irish IT sector. It synthesises information on prevalence, drivers, intervention effectiveness, and contextual factors.

Limitations inherent to this library-based study include:

- **Reliance on Secondary Data:** Findings are based on existing literature, precluding definitive conclusions about lived experiences or outcomes within specific Irish IT firms.
- **Data Scarcity:** Research specifically on interventions within the Irish IT sector is limited; inferences were drawn from broader or international data.
- **Interchangeable Terminology:** Some source materials use "stress" and "burnout" interchangeably, potentially affecting synthesis precision.
- **Scope:** The review focused primarily on individual-level interventions, acknowledging but not deeply exploring organisational-level approaches.

Recommendations for Future Research

Stemming from the identified gaps, future research should prioritise:

1. **Empirical Studies in Irish IT Sector:** Conduct research within Irish IT organisations to assess prevalence, sector-specific stressors, and intervention effectiveness (both individual and organisational). Qualitative studies exploring experiences are needed.
2. **Longitudinal Intervention Studies:** Evaluate the long-term effectiveness (beyond a few months) of interventions like ACT and MBIs within this sector.
3. **Comparative Effectiveness Research:** Directly compare different individual modalities (e.g., CBT vs. ACT) for stress and burnout dimensions within the IT workforce. A comprehensive research that studies all dimensions of burnout is needed even for a well researched modality like CBT.
4. **Integrated Approaches:** Investigate the synergy of combining individual support with organisational-level interventions (e.g., PSC improvements) in Irish IT firms.

Psychotherapy-informed interventions represent valuable components of a comprehensive strategy to promote employee well-being and mitigate work-related stress and burnout within the Irish corporate sector, including the demanding IT and technology industry. Approaches like CBT, MBIs, and particularly ACT offer evidence-based methods for enhancing individual coping resources, managing distress, and potentially fostering psychological flexibility. However, the evidence reviewed strongly caution against viewing these as standalone solutions. Sustainable improvements in employee mental health within high-pressure environments necessitate a concurrent focus on addressing underlying organisational and systemic factors that contribute to chronic stress. Future efforts, both in research and practice, should prioritise the development, implementation, and rigorous evaluation of integrated strategies that target both individual resilience and the creation of genuinely healthier and more supportive psychosocial work environments within the Irish IT sector and beyond.

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