

ANALYSIS OF FACTORS OF OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG PUBLIC TRANSPORT EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT:

Stress has become an inevitable part of our life, irrespective of the profession one is involved in. The advancement of technology and the ever increasing want of luxury possessions put an extra pressure on human beings. All the pressures in life lead to stress which have adverse effects on the physique and psychology of a personnel. Occupational stress is the stress arising from one's occupation and it also results in psychosomatic disorders among personnel. This study aims to assess the different factors causing occupational stress in employees of public transport in Pune city. The study also highlights the levels of occupational stress among the public transport employees.

KEYWORDS: Occupational stress, Stressors, work overload, role ambiguity, working conditions.

INTRODUCTION:

People's life in contemporary societies has become more diversely demanding, complicated, mechanical and dependent, and is running by the clock. Ever increasing needs and aspirations, high competition, pressures of meeting deadlines and uncertainty of future and weakened social support system have made the life of majority of people highly stressful in modern societies. Moreover, the success of organizations is highly dependent on the workforce. So it becomes highly important for any organization to take of the physical as well as mental well-being of their employees. In modern times, many studies have highlighted the sources of stress in different context and the various measures adopted by individuals as well as organizations to cope with stress. Stress is not always negative. Some amount of stress is important for the better performance of the individuals and organization. The positive stress which enhances one's performance is often termed as 'Eustress'. Occupational stress is not an isolated single variable. It is a complex phenomenon, which is the result of interaction of many environmental, organisational and personal factors. These different factors which lead to occupational stress are termed as 'stressors'. Occupational stress is experienced by categories of workers, all workplaces irrespective of the fields, country. Beehr and Newman¹ define job stress as "a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning."

In metros, public transport proves to be the predominant mode of transport for people commuting within the city. In city like Pune, the road public transport provides good connectivity across the city. Due to exponential increase in city population, the traffic in cities is also on a rise. The bus drivers and conductors of public transport have to commute daily across the city, on the over-crowded roads, ensuring safe driving for the passengers. The bus drivers and conductors also have to handle passengers who are very demanding and rude, at times. The condition of the roads and the buses adds to the stress of the employees.

OBJECTIVES:

- To highlight the levels of occupational stress among the public transport employees.

- To assess the different factors causing occupational stress in employees of public transport in Pune city.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Basically, an individual experiences stress due to different reasons. Leif W. Rydstedt, Gunn Johansson and Gary W. Evans² concluded that workload demands among urban bus operators are related to spillover of fatigue from work to leisure, perceived effort of work, and psychosomatic complaints. There are no interactive effects of gender and workload. Blue-collar men and women in the same high stress occupation appear to react to changes in job stress over time in a similar manner. According to Shain³, Research on workplace stress shows that stress is positively correlated with high job demands and low job control. While high demands, low control, and high effort, low rewards are influences of workplace stress, the effects of these influences are believed to multiply when workplace conditions are perceived to be unfair.

As per study conducted by Parasuraman and Alutto⁴, in an organisation, workers are likely to experience stress of low status, shortage of resources, high demands for a large volume of work and poor representation in the decision making policies. According to Sharma and Mehta⁵, certain working conditions are stressful to most people and the job conditions that may lead to stress are – unfair treatment, exhaustion, design of tasks, management style, interpersonal relationships, work roles, career concerns, environmental conditions, nature of job etc. Srivastava and Krishna⁶ noted that employees with external locus of control experience comparatively higher degree of occupational stress, and lower job satisfaction. Landy and Trumbo⁷ have reported job insecurity, excessive competition, hazardous working conditions, task demands and large or unusual working hours as major sources of job stress. According to Kornhauser⁸ and Buck⁹, factors intrinsic to job which includes paced-repetitive work, lack of opportunities to use valued skills and abilities, and high costs and penalties for mistakes have been indicated as stressors in work setting. Quick and Quick¹⁰ have emphasized the role of interpersonal factors in creating stress at work. Conflict between individuals because of incompatible goals or substantive issues, and emotional issues create stress. From the findings of his study, Cummins¹¹, suggested role conflict and ambiguity, work overload, under utilization of skills, resource inadequacy and lack of participation as the main categories of work stressors. Srivastava and Singh¹², in their study have developed an occupational stress index. A pilot study has developed an occupational stress index. It assesses perceived occupational stress related to role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressures, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability. A research paper by Dastur¹³ states that work group climate is an important cause of managerial stress and perceived power is the second most potent cause of stress. Role ambiguity did not arise as a significant cause of stress in this study. Thus, negative group climate and powerlessness may be dominant causes of stress experienced by Indian managers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**Sample**

A pilot study was conducted amongst drivers and conductors of public transport in Pune city. Random sampling was used for sample selection in the present study. The participants were 65 employees which included drivers (N=24, 37%) and conductors (N=41, 63%).

Tools of Measurement

Along with demographical datasheet (age, education, gender, years of work, marital status, designation and monthly salary), a scale (Occupational Stress Index) developed by A.K.Srivastava and A.P.Singh was used. The scale had 46 items and the participants were asked to select any one of the five alternative responses to indicate the nature and conditions of their job and their experiences and feelings about various aspects of job life. Some interviews were also conducted to collect additional and supportive information.

RESULTS:

The results indicated that there is a high percentage of employees with high level of occupational stress (N=29, 45%). The results further state that there are many employees with moderate (N=28, 43%) stress level whereas employees with low (N=8, 12%) level of occupational stress are very less in number.

The results show that the major stressors among bus drivers and conductors include work overload (N=49, 75%); less salary as compared to work (N=42, 65%); inability to devote sufficient time for personal problems (N=41, 63%); working under tense circumstances (N=41, 63%); non-consideration of opinions, suggestions related to work, framing of policies, important appointments, training programmes and so on (N=40, 61%); role ambiguity (N=38, 58%); less opportunity for development (N=36, 55%).

The results also point out that other significant stressors include non-caring of self-respect by higher authorities, non-cooperation of colleagues for solving work-related problems.

DISCUSSIONS:

The findings indicate that the level of occupational stress among drivers and conductors is high and needs to be addressed by the management.

As per the study, work overload causes highest stress in drivers and conductors. Drivers and conductors have to wait for 2-3 hours for allocation of work and after that their 8 hours of duty starts. According to Rydstedt, L.W. et.al.¹⁴, increased workload was associated with increased exhaustion after work, difficulties in unwinding after work, problems in coping with demands at home, and recreational use of free time. Negative impacts on city bus drivers' health and well-being from work overload have been demonstrated by self-reported and /or objective measures in two cross-sectional studies conducted by Carrere et.al.¹⁵ and Gardell et.al.¹⁶.

It has been observed from the results that employees with salary either less than Rs. 10,000/- or in the range of Rs.10,000/- to Rs.15,000/- have indicated high level of stress and the percentage of such employees is also high (N=20, 69%).

As discussed, work overload leads to inability to give sufficient time for self and family and results into stress. Out of 29 employees with high levels of stress, 21 employees (73%) have responded to indicate the intensity of the stressor. Due to long hours of work and excessive physical strain, the drivers and conductors are unable to contribute or involve themselves for their household tasks.

The respondents have indicated working under tense circumstances also high as is evident from the nature of their work. The drivers have to drive the long vehicle on the narrow, overcrowded roads taking due care of the safety of the passengers, other vehicle drivers as well as pedestrians. The conductors also have to deal with passengers who are many-a-times, arrogant, demanding and rude. These employees also are assaulted and have to face the brunt of anti-social movements. While driving late night, they also have the fear of being robbed, since they have a good amount of cash with them.

The responses showing high percentage for involvement in administrative work which includes opinions, suggestions regarding work, training, policy framing highlights the fact

that there is no workers' participation in management of the organization. Based on the competency or experience the employee's suggestions or opinions are not sought for improving the organization's performance.

Though there are fewer levels for professional progression, the employees feel the need for opportunity to develop their proficiency. And the inability for any such development leads to stress among the employees.

CONCLUSION:

It is observed that the study highlighted that employees of public transport are prone to high levels of stress. The major sources of stress, called as stressors leading to occupational stress are also identified from the study. The stressors can be broadly categorized into - stressors intrinsic to job, role in the organization, relationship at work, career development, organizational structure and climate, technological change and home-work interface. The review of literature related to effects of occupational stress indicates that occupational stress has a significant impact on the performance of employees and organization. Organizations should adopt various strategies to help the employees cope with stress and increase their efficiency.

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