

Organisational Stress: a Study with Special Reference to Tirupur Knitwear Industry



Management

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Dr. A. Jelince Dhinakar

Assistant Professor in Business Administration, Government Arts College (Autonomous), Karur, Tamil Nadu

Ms. S.Mekala

Assistant Professor, PG Department of Management Science & Research, Park's College (Autonomous), Affiliated to Bharathiar University, chinnakarai, Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

ABSTRACT

Stress is a serious problem in everyone's life that too much stress has an important part in the employees working in knitwear processing units of Tirupur.

The article emphasizes that organizational stress plays a crucial part in the day-to-day work life of knitwear employees in Tirupur. The knitwear processing units here is in contrast to other sectors with odd working hours and indifferent work culture. The paper examines the employee's level of stress due to organisational factors among five garment processing units in Tirupur such as knitting, dyeing, compacting, printing and garment making. The researchers have surveyed 150 employees from five knitwear processing units. Primary data have been collected through interview schedule. Data have been analysed with statistical tools such as percentage analysis, weighted average method, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) & Chi-Square tests. Stress and stress-factors differ across cultures and industries and hence, this article suggests some universally applicable optimistic stress-coping strategies for all employees.

INTRODUCTION:

Tirupur is an important trade Centre in India. It is famous for production of knit garment wears and is a major source of foreign exchange for the country. Tirupur has a unique significant presence at the lower end of the international hosiery and knitwear market. The prestigious and mature international knitwear centre hosts a sequence of knitwear processing units such as knitting, dyeing, printing, embroidery, compacting, calendaring, cutting, stitching, ironing, packing, inspection and shipment. [3] Jelince Dhinakar A 2009

All these units are labour intensive and employees at all levels play a crucial role in processing garments to meet deadlines and buyer specifications. Majority of the workers in this region are migrant workers from the economic and socially disadvantaged areas of Tamilnadu State. Considerable employees are also from other states like Orissa, Bihar, and Chhattisgarh where employment opportunities are a few. Long working hours, arduous work, amateur work climate, and low wages does not mar men and women from serving the industry for want of their livelihood. Under such circumstances, stress is a serious problem in the employees' life. Long working hours and work overload are common and widely experienced problems by the knitwear employees.

When stress gets out of control it creates problem at work and affects personal relationships of employees in the knitwear processing units of Tirupur. Employees are found to adopt some negative mechanisms like use of alcohol, smoking and excessive use of drugs to cope with stress. Therefore, a strong need to study stress among the employees working in knitwear processing units was essential for the well-being of employees and firms of the knitwear industry. This article is an outcome of such a study conducted on stress among five key knitwear-processing units i.e. knitting, compacting and calendaring, dyeing and bleaching, printing and embroidery and garment making which includes the cutting, stitching, ironing, packing, inspection, and shipment activities. The article also highlights some common strategies that stress prone employees can adopt for their well-being.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- Discern the socio-economic background of employees in knitwear industry
- Study the factors causing organisational stress among employees working in knitwear processing units of Tirupur
- Propose constructive stress-coping strategies to reduce organisational stress

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Tirupur hosts more than 5000 export units. Among those units, the researcher selected five main processing units like Knitting, Dyeing and Bleaching, Compacting and Calendaring, Printing and

Embroidery and Garment making (Cutting, Stitching, Checking, Ironing, and Packing). The employees of Knitwear processing units were the sample respondents for the study. The researcher selected 150 employees from five processing units - 30 samples from each unit. Interview schedules were used for collection of primary data during the period April 2010 and September 2010. The respondents were selected randomly from each processing unit. Primary data were collected through interview schedules to meet the objectives of the study. Secondary sources such as journals, magazines, project reports, research reports, textbooks and Tirupur Exporters Association manual were used to collect the profile of the industry and its employees.

Percentage analysis is used to assess the socio economic profile of the employees working in knitwear processing units of Tirupur. Likert scaling was used to find the employees agreeableness on various stressors. The ANOVA analysis helps to know the significant relationship between socio economic profiles with organisational stress. The chi-square analysis helps to know the significant association between area of work with organisation stress.

ORGANISATIONAL STRESS IN KNITWEAR PROCESSING UNITS

"Nothing gives one person so much advantage over another as to remain always cool and unruffled under all circumstances."- Thomas Jefferson

Pressures at work place are unavoidable due to the demands of the contemporary work environment. Demir et al (2003) [2] Employees of the knitwear processing units of Tirupur face job stress caused by a complex set of reasons. Some of the most perceptible causes of stress that are studied in the research are discussed below.

Overload occurs when an employee has more work to do than he /she can handle. Jobs in knitwear processing units are prone to heavy workload, overcrowded room, dimly lit location and lack of work recognition which cause tension and anxiety to the employees. Interruptions in many forms produce constant pressure at work that leads to stress among employees.

Another constant source of stress pounces from working with superiors, peers or subordinates with whom one does not get along and lack of good interpersonal relationships. Aggressive behaviour of a superior represents the managerial style of the organization. Stress in also due to partiality and unhealthy politics. Fear and anxiety sneak into employees when unrealistic goals are to be performed. The knitwear industry is more vulnerable to tight schedules and short delivery periods.

Satisfaction, though a state of mind, is primarily influenced by

the positive external factors like friendliness, respect from other members, self-respect, support, opportunity to interact, protection against threats and feeling of safety. Lack of social support can turn to be very stressful for the employees to work in organisations.

Inconvenience is caused to the employees also due to lack of infrastructure facilities in the organisation like lighting, ventilation, restrooms, canteen etc. Adding to these, frequent breakdown of machineries also creates pressure in the minds of employees.

Jobs are also found routine and monotonous and happen to be too demanding giving employees stress in their job. Knitwear production involves a set of interrelated processes where great coordination is required. In such a situation, improper delegation of authority and responsibility leads to employees stress.

An another major cause of stress is poor transportation as the jobs in processing units demands employees attendance in time and many of the employees are found to travel during busy hours and from long distances.

Low wages also turn out to be an important source for stress as employees struggle to strike a balance between their expenses and incomes. Eventually anxiety and frustrations pop from lack of job security. Shift systems though have been a common scenario in the knitwear industry, it is still a havoc for many employees due to work-life imbalance and health problems.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE EMPLOYEES:

The socio-economic profile of individuals plays a vital role in developing the attitudes and shaping the personality of employees. The socio-economic forces combined in various forms and contents, keep employees to a particular style of life. Age, gender, marital status, education and income substantially influence employees stress. Higher education level, work experience and higher status decrease burnout in professional and private lives of employees (Demir et al (2003) [2]) For a proper perspective analysis, all major components of social and economic environment influencing the burnout of employees have been considered.

Table - 1: SOCIO - ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

S. NO	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage
I	Age:		
1	Below 20 Years	15	10
2	20-30 Years	84	56
3	31-40 Years	33	22
4	Above 40 Years	18	12
II	Gender:		
5	Male	98	65
6	Female	52	35
III	Marital Status:		
7	Married	113	75
8	Unmarried	34	23
9	Divorced	-	-
10	Widow	03	02
IV	Educational Qualification:		
11	Secondary Level	28	19
12	Higher Secondary Level	79	53

13	Technical Education	25	17
14	Graduation	18	11
15	Post-Graduation	-	-
V	Monthly Income:		
16	Below Rs.5000	5	3
17	Rs.5001-Rs.10000	93	62
18	Rs.10001-Rs.15000	40	27
19	Above Rs.15000	12	8

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 presents the details on the socio-economic characteristics. Out of 150 employees surveyed, majority of the employees (56%) belonged to the age group of 20-30 years. Sixty five percent of the employees were male. Seventy five percent of the employees in the sample were married and fifty three percent of the employees were higher secondary qualified. Sixty two percent of employees were found to earn a monthly income between 5001 and 10000.

MEAN SCORE VALUE OF ORGANISATIONAL STRESS:

Employee stress is definitely a major concern in the knitwear processing units of Tirupur. Common and widely experienced problems causing organisational stress during working hours were identified for obtaining the employees opinion. The opinions were obtained on a 5 point scale with designated attributes 'strongly agree,' 'agree,' 'neutral,' 'disagree,' and 'strongly disagree.' Specified numerical weights were assigned for each attribute as 1,2,3,4 and 5 respectively. The levels of agreement on the factors causing organisational stress among the employees were determined on the basis of the mean score of all statements as found in Table -2.

Table - 2: MEAN SCORE VALUE OF ORGANISATIONAL STRESS

S.NO	ORGANISATIONAL STRESS / VARIABLES	MEAN SCORE
1.	Uncomfortable work area	4.18
2.	Poor Interpersonal relationship with superiors & co-workers	4.99
3.	Conflicts with colleagues	4.05
4.	Lack of work recognition	3.24
5.	Gossiping	3.89
6.	Repetitive tasks	3.45
7.	Low social support	4.03
8.	Inadequate infrastructure facilities in organisation	4.13
9.	Improper Delegation	3.18
10.	Heavy work load	3.79
11.	Machinery break down	3.5
12.	Aggressive behavior of superior	3.97
13.	Poor Transport facilities	4.01
14.	Low wages, bonus & incentives	4.32
15.	Unhealthy work politics	4.27
16.	Job insecurity	3.78
17.	Frequent changes in shift	4.05
18.	Fear of new technology	3.99
19.	Power cut during working hours	4.13
	TOTAL	3.9

Source: Primary Data

The means score of 3.9 in Table – 2 shows that stress plays a considerable havoc in the organisational life of the employees in the knitwear processing units. Poor interpersonal relationship with superiors & co-workers, low wages, bonus & incentives, unhealthy work politics, uncomfortable work area, power failures, inadequate infrastructure facilities, conflicts with colleagues, frequent changes in shift, low social support, poor transport facilities, fear of new technology and aggressive behaviour of superior are the major stressors as their corresponding mean scores exceed the average 3.9.

Though the corresponding mean scores of other factors such as gossiping, heavy workload, job insecurity, repetitive tasks, lack of work recognition, improper delegation and machinery break down fall below the average mean score, none is found with negligible scores and these factors also need considerable attention.

ANOVA ANALYSIS:

An attempt was made to test the significant impact of socio-economic profile of the employees and the organisational stress. ANOVA was performed with socio-economic profile of the employees as independent variables and organisational stressors as dependent variable. Several hypothesis listed below were formulated to test the significant association between the former and the later.

HYPOTHESIS TESTED:

1. There is no significant association between age and organisational stress.
2. There is no significant association between gender and organisational stress.
3. There is no significant association between marital status and organisational stress.
4. There is no significant association between educational qualification and organisational stress.
5. There is no significant association between monthly income and organisational stress.

Table – 3: SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE & ORGANISATIONAL STRESS

Variables	Degrees of freedom	F	F _{0.5}	Decision
Age and organisational stress	3,4	7.83	6.56	Reject the H ₀
Gender and Organisational Stress	1,4	0.96	7.71	Accept the H ₀
Marital Status and Organisational Stress	1,1	164.33	161.4	Reject the H ₀
Educational Qualification and Organisational Stress	4,4	1.95	6.39	Accept the H ₀
Monthly Income and Organisational Stress	3,4	8.87	6.56	Reject the H ₀

Source: Primary Data

Results obtained from ANOVA Table – 3 reveals the significant association between age, marital status & monthly income with organisational stress. However, gender and educational qualifications have no significant association with organisational stress at 5% level of significance.

CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS:

Presence of stress in work at all levels of organizations is almost inevitable. The study also focused on finding the effect of stress on the performance of employees working in various knit wear processing units surveyed. Significant association between organisational stress and jobs in processing units such as Knitting, Dyeing and Bleaching, Compacting and Calendaring, Printing and Embroidery and Garment making were tested with chi-square analysis. The following hypotheses were formulated to test the same.

H0: There is no significant association between area of work and organisational stress

H₁: There is a significant association between area of work and organisational stress

Table – 4: AREA OF WORK AND ORGANISATIONAL STRESS

Variables	Degrees of freedom	c ²	T-value	Decision
Area of work & Organisational Stress	16	29.477	26.296	Reject the H ₀

Source: Primary Data

Table – 4 Chi-square shows that the calculated value is greater than the table value. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected and there exists a significant association between the employees' area of work and organisational stress at 5% level of significance.

FINDINGS:

1. Most of the employees working in the knitwear processing units of Tirupur are aged between 20 and 30 years. Sixty five percentage of the employees are male. Seventy five percentage of the employees are married and fifty three percentage of the employees are higher secondary qualified. Sixty two percent of the employees earn a monthly income between rupees 5001 and 10000.
2. All variables identified as common factors for causing organisational stress viz., uncomfortable work area, poor relationship with superiors & co-workers, conflicts with colleagues, lack of work recognition, gossiping, repetitive tasks, low social support, inadequate infrastructure facilities, improper delegation, heavy work load, machinery break down, aggressive behavior of superior, (xiii) poor transport facilities, low wages, bonus & incentives, unhealthy work politics, job insecurity, frequent changes in shift, fear of new technology and power failures during working hours have considerably turned out to be real stressors for the employees in knitwear processing units of Tirupur
3. In concurrence to earlier research outcomes, the present study reveals a significant association between the socio-economic variables such as age and monthly income with organisational stress. However, in contradiction to the outcome of earlier studies and in specific to that of Demir et al (2003), the study reveals that there is no significant association between gender and educational qualifications with organisational stress. This disassociation is perpendicularly because of lack of professionalism in the knitwear industry in Tirupur. There is no scope for educational fitness and nature of jobs.
4. Significant association is found between organisational stress and the employees area of work i.e. processing units such as Knitting, Dyeing and Bleaching, Compacting and Calendaring, Printing and Embroidery and Garment making.

SUGGESTED STRESS-COPING STRATEGIES

Employees working in knitwear processing units experience stress at work due to long working hours, job insecurity, inadequate wages and lack of coordination. Strategy for reducing the organisational stress among the employees should be warped and weaved into the knitwear organisations operations. The employers should provide alternative work week schedules, rotating shifts in a forward (day to night) schedule, reduce use of forced overtime, develop autonomous work groups, develop empathy, create a stress free work environment, provide time for relaxing during the lunch breaks, give small bonuses for achieving deadlines and project completions, and make the employees feel happy by appreciating and encouraging them to reduce work place stress.

Firms should reduce stress as a part of their organizational development process. Stress management programmes can be conducted at reasonable time intervals. Stress management techniques like physical exercise, relaxation, conduct off-site picnics, games, and inter-departmental competitions. Holistic

stress therapies as suggested by experts such as aromatherapy, yoga, acupuncture hypnosis and of course simple exercises, time management techniques and healthy eating practices can be administered to help employees deal with work-related stress.

The knitwear processing units can render counseling to the employees on healthy eating habits and good lifestyles. Companies can also consider employing psychologists to counsel their employees.

Firms can give workers as much control over their jobs and work life as possible. They can invest in employee resiliency training through "heartmath" technique. It is a scientifically validated tool to change stress response by managing the emotions of an individual. Heartmath system can help employees begin feeling healthier and happier and start living life more

fully. Firms can refer to the website "www.heartmath.org" for acquainting themselves with this technique and implement it.

CONCLUSION:

Stress plays an important role in the work performance of employees in the knitwear industry. It is high time for the owners of Knitwear firms to realise that the impact of stress on their employees also have an impact on organizations performance. Any adverse impact of stress on employees intelligence, emotions and relationships will reduce the overall organisational performance and hence employers should also give importance for the well-being of their employees. Therefore organizations should take responsibility for improving employee's physical, mental and emotional well-being through taking appropriate stress-management measures parallel to their core operations.

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