

Occupational Stress : An Analytical Study Of Stress Among Dabbawalas Of Mumbai Tiffin Suppliers Association

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INTRODUCTION TO STRESS

The word 'stress' is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "a state of affair involving demand on physical or mental energy". It is a condition or circumstance (not always adverse), which can disturb the normal physiological and psychological functioning of an individual. In medical parlance, 'stress' is defined as a perturbation of the body's homeostasis. This demand on mind-body occurs when it tries to cope with incessant changes in life. A 'stress' condition seems 'relative' in nature. Extreme stress conditions, psychologists say, are detrimental to human health, but in moderation, stress is normal and, in many cases, proves useful. Stress, nonetheless, is synonymous with negative conditions. With the rapid diversification of human activity, we come face to face with numerous causes of stress and the symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Stress at work is a relatively new phenomenon of modern lifestyles. The nature of work has gone through drastic changes over the last century, and it is still changing at whirlwind speed. Change has touched almost all professions, starting from an artist to a surgeon, or a commercial pilot to a sales executive. With change comes stress, inevitably. Professional stress or job stress poses a threat to physical health. Work related stress in the life of organized workers, consequently, affects the health of organizations. Ever increasing needs and aspirations, high competition, pressure of meeting deadlines, and uncertainty of future and a weakened social support system has made life of people more stressful in modern societies. The term stress is derived from the Latin word *stringere*, which means to draw tight. The term was used to refer to hardship, adversity, strain or affliction. Personal characteristics of the employee and his cognitive appraisal of the job factors in the framework of his capacity and resource determine the extent of stress he would experience from a job factor or situation. Another set of factors in the work setting, which cause stress are related to qualities of physical work environment and technology. Inadequate, taxing, or hazardous physical conditions at work, such as insufficient or excessive lighting, continued loud noise, extreme cold or heat, fluctuation in temperature, crowded workplace also cause stress. Occupational stress has been observed to be associated with alienation and high rate of absenteeism and turnover of the employees. These job behaviors have been identified as symptoms of stress. Occupational stress affects not only different aspects of job behavior of the individual employees, but also ultimately results in a noticeable deterioration in the overall effectiveness of the organization and causes significant deterioration in physical and psychological well-being of the focal persons. Cannon (1935) used the term stress to describe physical stimuli and used it to find an organism's response to the stressor. Kornhauser (1965), in his study of blue-collar workers, found that poor mental health was directly related to unpleasant working conditions, necessity to work fast, to expend a lot of physical effort, and to work for excessive and inconvenient hours. Caplan, Cobb & French (1975) have defined Occupational stress as, "any characteristic job environment which poses a threat to the individual". Cooper and Marshal (1976) have expressed that "by occupational stress, is meant negative environmental factors or stressors associated with a particular job". Beer and Newman (1978) described job stress as a condition wherein job-related factors interact with workers to change (disrupt or enhance) his psychological conditions, such that the person is forced to deviate from normal functioning. Allen, Hit and Green (1982) have defined Occupational Stress as, "disruption in the individual psychological or physiological homeostasis that forces them to deviate from normal functioning in interaction with their jobs and work environment". Srivastava and

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Krishna (1991) in their measure of "*functional role stress*" have included five role stressors having positive value - viz. responsibility for persons, excessive responsibility (with authority), taking decisions that affect others, strenuous tasks that bring recognition and facilitate personal growth, and perceiving oneself as not fully competent.

Job stress is caused by conditions in the workplace that negatively affect an individual's performance and/or overall well-being of his body and mind. One or more of a host of physical and mental illnesses manifests job stress. In some cases, job stress can be disabling. In chronic cases, a psychiatric consultation is usually required to validate the reason and degree of work-related stress. Working on a project on stress at work, Andy Ellis, Ruskin College, Oxford, UK, had shown in a chart, how stress can adversely affect an employee's performance. In the early stages, job stress can 'rev up' the body and enhance performance in the workplace, thus the term, '*I perform better under pressure*'. However, if this condition is allowed to go unchecked and the body is revved up further, the performance ultimately declines and the person's health degenerates. Stress is a most common problem in today's workplace; it is one of the major reasons for high employee turnover in organizations.

Agarwal (1984) suggested for application of job characteristics approach in reducing organizational stress. He was of the opinion that a person should be given a task according to his characteristics. Ross and Altmaier (1994) suggested that occupational stress can be minimized by redesigning jobs and improving job characteristics, i.e. to change the certain aspects of a job, which may lead to improved efficiency of employees. Ivancevich and Mattenson (1987) suggested that specific managerial intervention is required in the form of training programmes, job security to employees, improvement in selection process to reduce employee stress. Though occupational stress has been labeled as harmful, causing a variety of somatic disorders, certain components of stress have been found to be beneficial to the health of the focal person. Milsum (1984) explored the positive aspects of optimal or well-balanced stress. Recent evidence also indicates that stress can markedly increase blood level endorphins, naturally-occurring morphine-like hormones associated with pain relief and feelings of well being.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study on the stress among the Tiffin suppliers of Mumbai (Dabbawalas) is conducted with the following objectives:

- ✿ To determine the level of satisfaction amongst workers.
- ✿ To analyze the impact of occupational variables like salary, job timings, transportation mode, arranged availability /non availability of career advancement measures on the overall job satisfaction.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The proposed research has two general purposes. The first purpose of the study is merely to replicate existing findings indicating that dabbawalas' levels of occupational stress and burnout are associated with the age, job timings, job working conditions, etc. The second purpose of the study is to expand the existing research. In this regard, the proposed research will expand the existing knowledge base through a test of the notion that one possible factor producing the increased stress felt by dabbawalas is the high degree of precision and adherence to strict delivery schedules that is the hallmark of their profession.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Occupational Stress and its unfavorable effects have been well-researched and documented. Stress itself has been studied from various perspectives. An extensive research study has been done on the topic of stress at the National and International level. A sincere attempt has been made to include the relevant and potent research literature for the purpose of the present research study.

Sofer (1970) said that work is a major source of stress. Stress can be caused by too much, or too little work, time pressure and deadlines, having to make too many decisions.

Arsenault and Dolan (1983) also supported the positive relationship of stress and performance. Researchers also suggest that work-related stress increases motivation and performance.

Sullivan and Bhagat (1992) even proved that job-related stress is the most responsible for job dissatisfaction.

A.P Singh and Bharti Singh's (1992) study provided for positive relationship between stress and strain. The study confirmed that managers with role stress experienced frustration, anger and job anxiety.

Desai's (1993) study confirms that middle and higher-level management experienced more stress than lower level management due to workload pressures.

P.T. Srinivasan and P. David Jawahar (2003) confirmed that the adverse nature of relationship between work stress, and psychosomatic symptoms establishes the need for stress monitoring and alleviating efforts by organizations. The extensive main effect evidenced for empowerment points to the efficacy of the construct as a supplementary predictor in stress research. The results supporting empowerment as a moderator of the work stress psychosomatic symptoms relationship suggested that organizations may adopt empowerment strategies such as delegation of authority, participation in decision-making, nurture task leadership, and mentoring for positive results.

Avinash Kumar Srivastav (2005) reveals that stress is minimum at the senior management level as compared to junior and middle management levels. This is logical as senior management has maximum control over their activities, responsibilities and environment. They have already advanced to the senior management level, hence, there is no feeling of stagnation.

Brenda Kingdon, Faith Halvorsen (2006) found that nurses in a Northeast Florida hospital perceived that situations they encountered while working in the operation room during their careers were stressful. Regardless of whether the stress is moderate or high, the cost of stress is enormous in terms of health-care workers' health and behavior.

Susan Chirayath conducted a study on Stress and Coping Mechanisms of Female Cashew Workers (2006). The study establishes that women workers have a combination of both job stress and family-induced stress, a majority of the respondents had a passive way of coping with stress.

Manivannan, M. G. Saravananaraj and S. Sumathi (2007) have some interesting findings on causes of stress. They found that the overall work is not a source of stress for the respondents. The level of stress is more due to the communication gap prevailing in the organizational hierarchy.

Christo F. V. Fernandes, Satish Kumar and Nandakumar Mekoth (2009) conducted a study to find stress among short, medium and long tenure groups in private and public sector Banks in Goa. The study revealed significant differences in stress experience among short, medium and long tenure groups. Long tenure groups experienced the minimum stress. Medium tenure group experienced a medium-level stress, and the short tenure group experienced the maximum stress, pointing to the existence of a negative relationship between length of service and role of stress. Sandhya Mehta and Sander Kaur (2009) found that stress levels for technical teachers were higher than that of non-technical teachers. Role expectations, Role overload, Role isolations are stronger for technical teachers than for non-technical teachers.

N. Kathirvel (2009) found stress among employees working in IT enabled (BPOs and call centers) services in Coimbatore had thrown up some interesting observations - like the study found that over half of the respondents were having problems working in the ITES sector, and most of them felt their jobs were monotonous and very hard. All these factors were responsible for an increase of stress among employees, this could be avoided through counseling, recreational and relaxation techniques.

Bahaudin G. Mujtaba, Donald Baker and Mohammed Ahmed (2009) found that young MBA students in United States of America tend to report significantly lower stress perception scores than the older respondents. This shows that as people age, stress levels go up significantly. This is because older MBAs are busier in their lives, as they are completing their academic dreams in the graduate program, or it may be the result of limited exposure to technology, and multitasking capabilities.

A.P. Singh and Sadhana Singh (2009) in the study on effects of stress and work culture on job satisfaction found positive life events like job promotion, job advancement, educational, etc. were responsible for satisfaction of employees and their better performance.

Shreekumar Menon (2010) found in a study related to job stress among employees of selected Banks in Mumbai that male employees are more comfortable with working hours than female employees and absence of stress management techniques has not affected the employees in any way.

R. Neelamegam and S. Asrafi (2010) found that stress level of middle-aged people working in Banks experienced more stress, similarly, people with less experience and temporary employees also experienced more stress.

Dr. H. Ramananda Singh and Sonit Dutta (2011) found occupational stress variables such as role overload, role authority, role conflict, lack of senior support contributes more to occupational stress.

ABOUT MUMBAI DABBAWALAS

Mumbai is one of the most populated cities in India, it is the place where millions of people commute to work on a daily basis by local trains and BEST buses. They have to carry their Tiffin (lunch) to work or have lunch in a Restaurant, which may not be a financially sound decision and unhealthy too; this has necessitated them to find a way to have home-cooked food at their work place. This problem is overcome through the services of Dabbawalas, who deliver Tiffins to the workplace, after charging a marginal monthly fee. They collect the Tiffin's from the customer's home in cylindrical Dabbas, which have an identification mark on them to facilitate locating their destination. Empty Tiffin boxes after lunch are again collected and sent back to the respective houses. Dabbawalas use the bicycle as a mode of transport, as it is non polluting and economical. Dabbawalas operate as one unit and have earned six sigma ratings. Mumbai's suburban railway forms the backbone of the entire dabba delivery system. The dabbawalas' system works because of their coordination and dedication to their work. They come from the rural area of Maharashtra, and speak a common language. The trainees coming from the villages usually belong to the family of an older dabbawala, who takes care of the training.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

❖ Hypotheses Of The Study

The study is conducted with the following hypothesis : The study sets the Null hypothesis (Ho), that the independent variables do not have any impact on job satisfaction and stress management.

The alternative hypothesis (H1) for each variable is as follows (Table 1).

Table 1 : List of Variables and Alternate Hypothesis	
Variable	H1 Alternative Hypothesis
Job timings	There is a positive correlation between job timings on job satisfaction and stress management (variable job timings may lead to dissatisfaction among the employees and lead to more stress).
Place of work	There is a positive correlation between Place of work on job satisfaction and stress management (Absence of a fixed place of work may reduce the employees' interest in the job, and it is likely to increase employee stress).
Transportation modes	There is a positive correlation between Transportation modes on job satisfaction and stress management (The employees are more likely to be dissatisfied when no Modern transport modes are provided also it is likely to increase physical stress of employees) .
Salary	There is a positive correlation between salary on job satisfaction and stress management (Absence of high pay may reduce the employee interest in job. The employees are also likely to be more stressed out in performing the job) .

❖ **Population and Sampling** : The research adopts the popular method accepted in the parlor of conducting social research. The minimum sample size was 500 dabbawalas of the total 5000. The sampling technique to be adopted is the random sampling technique. The primary sources were Questionnaires , Interviews, and observations. Secondary sources of data used were journals, books, and internet websites. The statistical methods proposed to be adopted were Correlation, ANOVA test and other appropriate statistical methods. The research and reporting are in the form of popular reporting method.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The present study has some limitations like :

- ❖ It is restricted to only one occupation of dabbawalas in Mumbai, and does not consider other occupations.
- ❖ The sample size selected for the study is small, as the number of dabbawalas interviewed were limited.
- ❖ The review of literature is limited to only role of stress in occupations.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The data collected through the Questionnaire was tabulated and analyzed using simple tables, and single factor

ANOVA. All analysis has been done at 5 % level of significance.

THE ANOVA TEST

Table 2 : Job Satisfaction And Place					
SUMMARY					
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance	
Job Satisfaction	5	4250	850	692326	
Place	5	2364	472.8	325037.2	
ANOVA					
Source of Variation	SS	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	355699.6	355699.6	0.699258	0.427302	5.317655
Within Groups	4069453	508681.6			
Total	4425152				

The result of ANOVA test reveals that the 'F' value 0.699258 is less than the 'F' critical value 5.317655 at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted that job satisfaction is not dependent on the place of work. It seems that the Dabbawalas are happy to work in their current workplace (Table 2).

Table 3 : Job Satisfaction And Timings					
SUMMARY					
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance	
Job Satisfaction	5	4250	850	692326	
Timings	5	1168	233.6	60870.8	
ANOVA					
Source of Variation	SS	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	949872.4	949872.4	2.522242	0.150913	5.317655
Within Groups	3012787	376598.4			
Total	3962660				

The calculated 'F' value 2.522242 is less than the 'F' critical value 5.317655 at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted that job satisfaction is not affected by job timings. The employees have accepted that job timings are convenient for them (Table 3).

Table 4 : Job Satisfaction And Transport					
SUMMARY					
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance	
Job Satisfaction	5	4250	850	692326	
Transport	5	1856	371.2	394433.2	
ANOVA					
Source of Variation	SS	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	573123.6	573123.6	1.054739	0.334466	5.317655
Within Groups	4347037	543379.6			
Total	4920160				

The result of ANOVA test reveals that the 'F' value 1.054739 is less than the 'F' critical value 5.317655 at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted that job satisfaction is not dependent on the mode of

Table 5 : Job Satisfaction And Salary					
SUMMARY					
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance	
Job Satisfaction	5	4250	850	692326	
Salary	5	1772	354.4	181980.8	
ANOVA					
Source of Variation	SS	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	614048.4	614048.4	1.404652	0.269956	5.317655
Within Groups	3497227	437153.4			
Total	4111276				

transportation arranged. The Dabbawalas are happy to pedal their way through the Mumbai traffic (Table 4). The result of ANOVA test reveals that the 'F' value 1.404652 is less than the 'F' critical value 5.317655 at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted that job satisfaction is not correlated with the salary given. Even with the low salaries, the Dabbawalas seem to enjoy the work assigned to them (Table 5).

Table 6 : Stress Management And Timings						
SUMMARY						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Stress Management	5	2396	479.2	225477.2		
Timings	5	1168	233.6	60870.8		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	150798.4	1	150798.4	1.053253	0.334787	5.317655
Within Groups	1145392	8	143174			
Total	1296190	9				

The result of ANOVA test reveals that the 'F' value 1.053253 is less than the 'F' critical value 5.317655 at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted that Stress management is not correlated with the job timings. Even with the Current timings, the Dabbawalas do not seem to be stressed out (Table 6).

Table 7 : Stress Management And Transport						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Stress Management	5	2396	479.2	225477.2		
Transport	5	1856	371.2	394433.2		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	29160	1	29160	0.094078	0.766887	5.317655
Within Groups	2479642	8	309955.2			
Total	2508802	9				

The result of ANOVA test reveals that the 'F' value 0.094078 is less than the 'F' critical value 5.317655 at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted that Stress management is not correlated with the Transport provided. The current mode of transporting i.e. the bicycle seems to be preferred mode of travel for the Dabbawalas (Table 7).

The result of ANOVA test reveals that the 'F' value 1.191124 is less than the 'F' critical value 5.317655 at 5% level of

Table 8 : Stress Management And Salary						
SUMMARY						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Stress Management	5	2396	479.2	225477.2		
Salary	5	1772	354.4	181980.8		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	38937.6	1	38937.6	0.191124	0.673543	5.317655
Within Groups	1629832	8	203729			
Total	1668770	9				

Table 9 : Stress Management And Place Of Work						
SUMMARY						
Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance		
Stress Management	5	2396	479.2	225477.2		
Place	5	2364	472.8	325037.2		
ANOVA						
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	102.4	1	102.4	0.000372	0.985084	5.317655
Within Groups	2202058	8	275257.2			
Total	2202160	9				

significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted that Stress management is not correlated with the salary. With the current pay, the Dabbawalas seem to be very happy to work (Table 8).

The result of ANOVA test reveals that the 'F' value 0.000372 is less than the 'F' critical value 5.317655 at 5% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted that Stress management is not correlated with the place of work. Even when the place of work is far away , it failed to dampen the spirits of the Dabbawalas (Table 9).

CONCLUSION

The paper concludes that job satisfaction and stress management are not affected by any of the variables studied viz. timings, transport, salary and place of work. Dabbawalas are satisfied with their working conditions. Their job satisfaction is not affected by their salary, job duration, transport facilities and place of work. Even stress management is not found to be related to any of the variables studied.

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