



Occupational Stress among Unorganized Sector Special Reference With Construction Workers

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Abstract

Occupational stress or workplace stress refers to the stress experienced as a direct result of a person's occupation. An occupation is work that is done in exchange for a regular wage. Pressure at the workplace is unavoidable due to the demands of the contemporary work environment. Stress is the single most common ailment in the workforce today and the one that causes thousands of hours of sick leave, sick pay, lost revenue and profitability. One of the main problems with work related stress is that most people are unaware of its existence and take no corrective steps until the condition becomes serious. Paradoxically, most people attend to a trivial cough, a bad throat or a headache immediately but stress related conditions are often left unattended as it is seen as an insignia of weakness. Stress and anxiety are linked to heart conditions, strokes, back problems, recurring colds and infections. Stress also affects the ability to think rationally and logically. The demographics of the unorganized sector are not available in literature. Due to the difficulties in conducting research in the unorganized sector, researchers have tried targeting specific population subsets for conducting their research. Even though this is not ideal, for want of better methods, this approach appears to be the plausible method at present to conduct research in unorganized sector. Construction workers form the majority of the unorganized sector in our country.

Key Words: Pressure, Occupational stress, unorganized sector, construction Workers.

Introduction

Occupational stress or workplace stress refers to the stress experienced as a direct result of a person's occupation. Work is the carrying out of tasks that involve the expenditure of mental and physical effort and its objective the production of goods and services catering to human needs. An occupation is work that is done in exchange for a regular wage. Pressure at the workplace is unavoidable due to the demands of the contemporary work environment. Increasing concern on the topic of occupational stress has placed it continuously on the agenda and thus stimulates ongoing research in this area. The roots of this great interest most probably lie in the growing concerns of people about their own health and their loved ones.

Stress is the single most common ailment in the workforce today and the one that causes thousands of hours of sick leave, sick pay, lost revenue and profitability. More evidently, it is the 'slippery slope' for many employees who never fully recover from stress-induced illnesses. The revenue lost by the employers is just the tip of iceberg. The employee who is the sufferer stands to lose everything. Left un-treated and unattended, stress will have an impact on the everyday life of an individual in a way that can become insurmountable. Modern households are occupied by two wage earners and the impact of work stress on home life becomes compounded. Both people need attention simultaneously, although neither has much to give. Resentments on the part of the partners often surface and spill over into relationships with children and others. In addition, use of alcohol and drugs can create further tension at home. Since work situations make no allowances for taking care of a family, working parents are under constant pressure to juggle the demands of their jobs with those of their families.

One of the main problems with work related stress is that most people are unaware of its existence and take no corrective steps until the condition becomes serious. Paradoxically, most people attend to a trivial cough, a bad throat or a headache immediately but stress related conditions are often left unattended as it is seen as an insignia of weakness. Stress and anxiety are linked to heart conditions, strokes, back problems, recurring colds and infections. Stress also affects the ability to think rationally and logically. Sufferers often become confused, over sensitive, feel isolated and even obsessed. This subsequently leads to more anxiety, exhaustion and worry-the vicious circle begins and the sufferer is trapped. Even though this is not ideal, for want of better methods, this approach appears to be the plausible method at present to conduct research in unorganized sector. Informal sector generally denotes the activities and services, which are readily associated with low wages and low level of skills. The informal sector comprises broadly the following groups:

1. Self employed traders, hawkers and family bases workers
2. Employees and workers in predominantly low wage paying sectors like rickshaw pulling, repair of bicycles, personal services, etc.

3. Employees and workers in comparatively better wage-paying occupation such a construction, manufacturing and repair activities.

The informal sector has reduced access to occupational health and safety services and other external support. They often lack awareness about occupational health in general. Poor occupational health and reduced working capacity of workers may cause economic loss up to 10-20% of the Gross National Product of a country. Besides income inequality, lack of job security and unsafe working conditions tend to reduce individual Well-being. Equitable access to paid employment with reasonable and safe working conditions is an essential element of any poverty reduction strategy.

Objectives of the study

1. To study construction workers perception about the construction field in the study area.
2. To find out the causes of stress among the construction workers.
3. To examine the outcome of causes of stress among the workers.
4. To assess the problems faced by the construction workers in the study region.
5. To study the income earning capacity of construction workers in the study place.

Review of Literature

Introduction

A literature review is an objective, critical summary of published research literature relevant to a topic that is taken up for research. The literature review creates familiarity with current thinking and research on a particular topic, and provides justification for future research into a previously overlooked or understudied area. Water R. Burg says, “The reflected literature in any field from the foundation on which all future work will be built”. The study of earlier research work on the topic helps in understanding the purpose of research, real method of research, its limitations etc. reference literature leads to development and progress in the concerned field of study. Previous researches are most in the concerned field of study. Previous research are most useful in the sense that they give logical information about the subject of the study and weak points besides providing associated factors, variables and discrete information.

This literature review represents the initial phase of a multi-part pragmatic study that will investigate occupational stress from the perspectives of all relevant parties. It an attempt to (1) identifies the key factors which contribute to the phenomenon; (2) examine the problems associated with occupational stress; and (3) investigate the outcomes and practices associated with the return to work process for people with stressed psychological conditions.

Wiesner, Margit Windle, Michael; Freeman, Amy (2005) in their research article titled “work stress, substance use, and Depression among young adult Workers” examined the relationships between five job stressors using data from a community sample of 583 young adults (mean age = 23.68 years) through a cross-sectional study. Analyses revealed a few direct associations between high job boredom, low skill variety, and low autonomy and depression measures and heavy alcohol use. There were no direct relationships between job stress and alcohol consumption, drug use, or heavy drug use. The findings supported a specificity-of effects hypothesis and underscored the need for examining the processes linking occupational stress to substance use and depression.

Debdulal Saha, (2008) in his paper titled, “Conditions of 'Decent Working Life' Of Street Vendors in Mumbai” intends to understand the condition of 'working life' of the street vendors in Mumbai within the framework of 'decent work'. He also highlights the role of the member-based organizations/unions to provide them decent working life by regulating the concept of the decent work.

The explorative study is based on 200 sample respondents. This study showed that the street vendors depend on the moneylenders for their economic activity as well as for social security purposes at exorbitant rates of interest. This study also revealed that besides prolonging working hours (around 14-18 hours per day), there was no safety and security at the work place. In addition, these retailers faced constant harassment from local authorities. The study concluded that there was a 'decent work deficit' in the 'working life' of 'street vendors' in Mumbai.

Bikram (2009), in his empirical socio-economic analysis based on a field study involving 1200 young unorganized workers found in the construction sector of the so-called tri-city of Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali. The key purpose of the study was to scrutinize the reasons of why and how the young migrant workers had come to work in this urban environment, how they live and spend their money and what they identify as their major problems. Based on the findings, the article argues that Indian policy makers, with specific regard to the urban unorganized labour sector, should take more-adequate measures for the protection of human rights of such migrant workers.

Debdulal Saha (2011) in his article titled “Working life of Street vendors in Mumbai” attempted to explore the working conditions and the rights of the street vendors in terms of level of income, access to finance and working hours. The exploratory study was based on a primary survey from 400 street vendors selected through cluster-based purposive sampling. Mixed methods were used to draw the sample. A semi-structured questionnaire containing open ended and close-ended questions was used to explore the current working conditions of street vendors. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the primary data obtained from the 400 individual samples. Eight individual cases based on responses from individual vendors were developed in order to explore the current situation. In addition, three individual cases developed from five key respondents were also sourced from membership-based organizations in order to gain an understanding of the role of

membership-based organizations. His study revealed that the working conditions of vendors were characterized by daily struggle, exorbitant bribes for sustenance, workplace harassments and unhealthy and unsafe work environments. The study brought to light the vulnerabilities that result in diseases, which are the outcomes of stress arising due to uncertainty of income.

Kamalakanta Mohapatra (2012) made a quantitative analysis based on the data collected from 500 workers consisting of rag pickers, domestic workers, coolies, vendors, beauticians, construction workers and garment workers through unstructured questionnaire and interviews to understand the reasons for particular employment, priority issues, wages and challenges in organizing the workers of the particular segment. The study aimed at understanding the degree of vulnerability of women workers in informal sector in India. This study was undertaken in the state of Odisha. The study brought to light the multiple constraints faced by the workers in the informal sector. It identified rag pickers, construction workers, and coolies, domestic workers as the most vulnerable segments in the unorganized sector.

Industry Background

Keith Hart, a Social anthropologist was the first person to familiarize the term informal sector into the academic literature. He used the term informal sector to label a fragment of the urban labour force, employed outside the formal labour market. Hart considered the informal sector as almost synonymous for all categories of (small) self-employed, individuals. Even though Hart's original notion of the informal sector is limited to the self-employed, the introduction of the concept made it possible to include activities that were previously overlooked in theoretical models of development. Carr and Chen broadly classified the workers, who come under informal economy as,

Employer:

- a) Owners of informal enterprises
- b) Owner operators of informal enterprises

Self-Employed:

- a) Own-account workers
- b) Heads of family businesses and unpaid family workers

Wage workers:

- a) Employess of informal Enterprises
- b) Casual Workers without a fixed Employer
- c) Home-Based Workers
- d) Domestic Workers

- e) Temporary and Part-Time Workers
- f) Unregistered Workers

Conclusion

Healthy and happy citizens make the country prosperous with their full-fledged commitment and contribution. Health is not merely the absence of disease or illness but a positive state of complete physical, mental and social well-being (WHO.1986). The world Happiness Report (WHR) 2017 highlights that happiness and subjective well-being are primary indicators of the quality of human development. The report further observed that work is a major factor affecting happiness and workers of all labour-intensive industries such as construction, mining, manufacturing and forestry suffer from mental ill health. That is the reason for work stress research being viewed as a practical way of interpreting and giving meaning to a series of intricate and diverse societal problems. Stress at work place causes repercussions in the society. Hence, it is time to focus on the “bottom of the Pyramid”. In India, construction workers are at the bottom of the pyramid being the largest but the poorest socio-economic group. Simply clearing the informal areas will not solve the problems. It will simply shift the same issue to another part of the city. The workers themselves can be a significant part of the solution.

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