

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND COPING MECHANISM AMONG LOWER LEVEL EMPLOYEES IN HOSPITALITY SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The hospitality sector is fast moving and dominant Industry in the state of Goa. The employees are performing job for 24 hours and 7 days a week with shift policy. This kind of work environment brings stressful situation for employees which can negatively affect employees in terms of low performance, absenteeism, turnover, etc. On the other hand, it also negatively affects organisation by way of low profitability, poor service to customers, etc. In order to avoid and manage stressful situations at the workplace, both the organisations as well as employees use some mechanism to manage stress. The present work highlights the stressors at the workplace and coping mechanism. The main objective of this study is to identify occupational stressors among lower level employees in the hospitality industry. The second objective is to identify coping mechanism used by employees to live stress free life. This study is based on field work and in order to collect required data about stressors, a well structured questionnaire of Occupational Stress Index developed by Srivastava and Singh (1981) has been used. The study has identified 13 major factors contributing stress at the workplace. In respect of second objective, the study reveals that employees use both emotion focused and problem focused coping mechanism.

Key Words: Stress, Stressors, Hospitality and Coping mechanism

INTRODUCTION

We live in the era of 21th Century, where we find happiness, sadness, anxiety, etc. are the factors we experience at every stages of our life. Amongst these, Stress is an important and most discussed element in our day to day life. According to Hans Selye (1974), stress is a physiological reaction to certain threatening environment and is caused by events in the work environment. Stress is an unavoidable thing for any human being because of various external factors, which are normally uncontrollable such as behaviour of others, lack of resources, if things are not happening as per our expectations, etc.

Like external factors, Stress can also occur because of internal factors which are normally controllable but if we give proper attention to these factors such as setting priorities in life, spending time with loved ones, proper utilisation of time and money etc., then we can live a stress free life.

If an individual has stress in his personal life, then he or she carries that stress amount at work and social life. Same thing happens in case of work or social life. If a person has stress at work, it will reflect in his or her social and personal life. So happiness or sadness of an individual depends on work life to a greater extent.

Work life can be a source of happiness or sadness or stress for any workers and it depends upon the following factors such as work load, peer relations, lack of career prospects, low salary, working conditions etc. The above said factors are mainly responsible for stress at the workplace which is known as occupational stress. According to (Beehr, A., & John E., 1978) Occupational Stress is defined as "a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characteristics by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning".

Stress normally brings various ill-effects related to health either physical or mental or both. According to (Lo & Lamm, 2005) occupational stress can contribute to work-related ill-health, with negative effects on both physical and psychological well-being. But stress is not always bad or negative as we look at this matter. Some level of stress helps us to perform at a higher level. However, there are times when stress becomes overwhelming. Having similar thought, Selye (1976) has differentiated between eustress and distress. Eustress is positive and the pleasant side of stress. On the other hand, distress refers to a destructive type of stress that depletes one's energy.

The present study focuses on occupational stressors and coping mechanism in hospitality Industry. As it is well known fact that hospitality industry is 24 x 7 working industry where volume of work, speed of work, visits of guests, etc. put lot of pressure on host to do their best. So obviously, when such kind of challenging environment is present in the industry, employees will face occupational stress. So it is a prime duty of any employer to control stress at the workplace by creating healthy environment through suitable stress management programmes. Stress management program or stress management intervention (SMI) is an activity created by an organization with an attempt to reduce work-related

stress or help employees to be less affected by negative influences of work stress (Ivancevich, Matteson, Freedman, & Phillips, 1990). On the other side individual employees also try to manage stress occurring at the workplace which is known as coping style and such style normally depends on personality. Coping is individual's attempt behaviour that conducts to manage encountered problems or conditions that he perceived as threats in order to stop, relieve or reject stress (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Schuler, 1984). It is very important for any organisation to manage stress in order to improve efficiency of employees as well as profitability. At the same time it is also important for employees to address stress issue at their level to keep them healthy and happy.

The main purpose of this study is to find out the stressors at the workplace and coping mechanism used by employees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many factors influence the human system and performance that result in stress. The causes of stress are known as stressors (Stranks, 2005).

Occupational stressors: These are caused due to too much or too little pressure. Conflicting job demands, excessive work hours and interchanging work and family demands. (Pedler & Boydell, 1985). **Felicity, K.I. (2005)** supported by evidence that work overload is one of the major stressor among hospitality employees because of shortage of employees due to financial or resource constraints. Later, **Gibbons, M.G. (2007)** studied chef profession and found additional stressors such as excessive workload, feeling undervalued, communication issues, bullying are the major contributor for stress among employees. Unlike previous research works **Keerthi, G.S. (2012)** conducted descriptive study to identify stressors among hotel employees. The study revealed that extra-organisational stressors like changes in technology at the work place, changes in family life, changes in societal pattern and group stressors like inter-personal and inter group conflict are the major factors induce the employees to get stress.

In addition to previous research output, similar study conducted on front line employees by **Akyaempong, W.G.S. (2014)** contributed additional factors such as Lack of support, role ambiguity, poor work relationship, demands at work, guests' attitude, lack of control and low income are the seven major factors contributing stressor at work place among front line employees. On the other hand **Veronica Waldthausen, D. H., et.al (2015)** Study found that the managers working in an outsourced hotel spa experience significantly more role ambiguity and role conflict than the managers of hotel-operated spas. Interesting finding found by **Grobelna, A. (2015)** revealed that if authority inspire their subordinates for creativity, then it is possible to reduce role ambiguity experienced by employees.

However researches that focuses on level of position revealed the followings. In a study of **Ajgaonkar, S. (2006)** The main stressors experienced by the managers of five star hotels are unfriendly attitude of guests, self-imposed factors, expectations of the higher authority and meeting different deadlines. In addition to managerial level, study also conducted on non-managerial position in a research output by **John W. O'Neill, K. (2011)** Inter-personal tension at the work place because of conflicts, arguments with colleagues and workload because of breakdown of machinery are the common work stressors among employees employed at managerial and non-managerial level (hourly workers) in 65 different hotels.

In case of recent studies conducted to identify stressors among hotel employees, the following results are identified by researchers. In case of **Bora, P. (2017)** Many hotels practice seasonal employment for lower level positions, the owners of the hotels layoff them in offseason. So seasonal employment is one of the reason for stress among hotel employees. As per, **Mohan, A. K. (2017)** the study conducted among hotel employees revealed that inadequate training programme, inadequate pay, lack of interpersonal relation and work environment issues are the major causes of stress. In addition to above almost similar findings are revealed by **Dr. Sachin S Vernekar, D. H. (2018)** study found that overtime practice, Inter-personal relationship and resource constraints are the contributor towards occupational stress in hotel industry. And in case of **Altintas, V. (2018)** study found that job characteristics like time pressure, role conflicts, overload, seasonal unemployment etc. are the major contributor of stress among non-managerial employees working in hotel industries.

Stress Management and Coping Mechanism

Ajgaonkar, S. (2006) study revealed that time management and optimistic attitude are considered as the most effective way of managing stress. Beside this researcher mentioned that proper training, feedback sessions, meditation and a disciplined lifestyle can reduce stress.

Keerthi, G.S. (2012) In order to reduce the extra organizational stressors, the management can conduct counseling among the employees (per month) to get well from the personal and family problems. And in order to reduce group stressors the management should concentrate on improving interpersonal relationship by conducting cultural programs, sports and meetings. **Srikhum, P. (2013)** study found that supportive work environment, flexible work schedule, employee empowerment, safety work environment, skill enhancement activities are the effective tools to manage stress at the organisational level. At the individual level employees also used emotion-focused and problem-focused style to manage stress.

Vidya Patwardhan, S.M., et.al (2014) In order to reduce job stress among managers, organizations should clearly outline and communicate its expectations, provide opportunity to develop their career and move to higher positions in the organization. Attention can also be paid to gender differences as organizations attempt to provide support and design programs to reduce stress levels of women managers. While some of the stressors may be common to all types of organizations, there are some pressures and demands that are unique to hospitality industry. Therefore there is a definite need for hotel companies to devise and invest in strategies that can keep the level of stress within the manageable limits among managers.

Banerjee, M. (2017) In order to reduce job stress among managers, organizations should clearly outline and communicate its expectations, provide opportunity to develop their career and move to higher positions in the organization. Attention can also be paid to gender differences as organizations attempt to provide support and design programs to reduce stress levels of women managers. **Bora, P. (2017)** Concluded that effective stress management programme is key for an organisation to improve the performance of their employees. Study further stated that employees in hotel industry at individual level uses different approaches to manage stress such as going to a hill station, talking to a person, TV, Sports, exercise, yoga, holiday, medicine, sleep, alcohol and sleeping.

Sachin Vernekar, D. H. (2018) recommended in this study that time management, career development appraisal, supervision and transparency can reduce occupational stress among hotel employees. **Agrusa, H.J. (2011)** The study reveals that emotional intelligence does not have much influence on emotion coping after the entry of two basic personality traits (neuroticism and extraversion); and EI is significantly related to avoidance coping encompassing social diversion and distraction. In addition, this study also reveals the critical role played by demographic characteristics in individual coping efforts.

Bansal, S.T. (2016) Study reveals that different coping mechanism is used by the women employees for managing the stress such as positive thinking, counselling, reduction in family responsibilities and recreation with family. Hotels are also using different techniques to help the

women employees to handle the stress and they are following six off-days in a month, women meet in every month and providing them with learning and training programs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify occupational stressors among lower level employees in hospitality Industry.
2. To identify coping mechanism of employees.

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed as a descriptive one and was carried out on 100 employees working in various restaurants in the North Goa district of Goa. The instrument used for data collection was based on Occupational Stress Index of Srivastava & Singh (1981, revised). The data collected has been subjected to Factor Analysis in order to arrive at a logical conclusion.

DISCUSSION

The responses received from the employees were exposed to Factor Analysis. The Value of Keiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures of sampling adequacy was obtained. Thus the results suggest the appropriateness of Factor Analysis Test. The responses obtained were put to Factor Analysis test using Principal Component Analysis through Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalisation. It was also tested through Bartlett's test of sphericity as to whether the variables were uncorrelated in the population. The test was found significant and hence Factor Analysis was appropriate. In order to assign some meaning to factor solution, a minimum level of factor loading has been selected in this analysis. The factor loading greater than 0.5 has been selected.

Table 1

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.637
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1032.860
	df	561
	Sig.	.000

Table 2
Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.873	11.392	11.392	3.873	11.392	11.392	2.804	8.248	8.248
2	2.042	6.006	17.398	2.042	6.006	17.398	1.977	5.816	14.064
3	1.842	5.417	22.815	1.842	5.417	22.815	1.792	5.272	19.336
4	1.609	4.733	27.547	1.609	4.733	27.547	1.555	4.573	23.908
5	1.480	4.352	31.899	1.480	4.352	31.899	1.550	4.557	28.466
6	1.458	4.288	36.188	1.458	4.288	36.188	1.446	4.253	32.719
7	1.400	4.117	40.304	1.400	4.117	40.304	1.446	4.252	36.971
8	1.311	3.855	44.160	1.311	3.855	44.160	1.434	4.217	41.188
9	1.219	3.586	47.745	1.219	3.586	47.745	1.405	4.132	45.320
10	1.188	3.494	51.239	1.188	3.494	51.239	1.353	3.978	49.298
11	1.143	3.363	54.602	1.143	3.363	54.602	1.325	3.897	53.195
12	1.120	3.294	57.897	1.120	3.294	57.897	1.324	3.893	57.087
13	1.017	2.990	60.887	1.017	2.990	60.887	1.292	3.800	60.887
14	.995	2.928	63.815						
15	.922	2.711	66.526						
16	.885	2.603	69.129						
17	.875	2.573	71.703						
18	.847	2.491	74.194						
19	.768	2.260	76.454						
20	.737	2.167	78.621						
21	.709	2.085	80.706						
22	.690	2.028	82.734						
23	.652	1.919	84.653						
24	.630	1.852	86.505						
25	.585	1.720	88.225						
26	.570	1.677	89.902						
27	.546	1.607	91.509						
28	.517	1.521	93.030						
29	.494	1.454	94.484						
30	.445	1.308	95.792						

31	.396	1.164	96.956										
32	.385	1.131	98.087										
33	.347	1.021	99.109										
34	.303	.891	100.000										

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 3 Rotated Component Matrix (a)

	Component												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Lot of work	-.110	-.065	.727	.020	-.123	-.010	-.074	-.024	.030	.162	.037	-.041	-.009
Work fast	.165	.151	.207	-.030	.065	-.075	.053	-.095	-.041	.152	-.004	-.735	.045
Works of others	-.045	.148	.152	-.038	.145	.046	.022	-.045	-.004	.763	.040	-.122	.041
Unable to carry	.592	.107	-.151	.136	-.049	.151	.166	.105	-.229	.215	.067	-.051	.058
Clear Objectives	.117	.264	-.137	.232	-.066	-.350	-.250	-.519	-.015	.021	-.053	.161	.060
Not clear expectation	.030	.569	.139	-.039	-.204	.307	.041	.179	-.288	-.232	-.047	.079	.019
Conflicting Demands	.385	.271	.183	.218	-.337	-.130	.102	.071	.050	-.057	.052	.001	-.357
No interference	.203	.067	-.013	.093	.425	-.105	.089	.497	.004	.013	-.102	-.140	.054
Don't like	.243	-.140	.150	.320	-.098	.099	-.040	.102	-.006	.279	.034	.284	.534
Defame	-.421	.253	.195	.296	-.110	.276	-.008	-.111	-.021	-.145	-.018	.260	.049
Help Voluntarily	-.134	-.232	-.111	.251	-.177	.159	-.002	-.122	.602	-.082	-.007	.136	.048
Team spirit	-.154	.036	-.010	-.136	.079	-.032	.192	.143	.696	.055	.022	-.009	.058
Monotonous	.191	-.004	.308	-.198	.036	.157	-.644	.077	-.084	-.064	.076	.072	.008
Opportunity to utilize	.072	-.029	-.018	.203	.319	.182	-.105	.043	.035	-.004	.611	-.021	.188
Respect at work	.000	.015	.055	.018	.022	.093	.726	.037	.083	-.022	-.002	.024	.045
Social Status	-.049	.009	.035	.052	.055	.740	.013	-.132	-.068	.167	.112	.147	.098
No significance to work	.081	.030	.056	.020	.067	.031	-.042	.108	.010	-.018	.763	.017	.123
Tense	-.056	.086	.427	.028	.472	-.027	.062	-.167	.106	-.361	.147	-.061	.202
Life Difficult	.067	.220	.336	-.168	.255	-.060	.081	-.098	.047	.100	.178	.522	.200
Working Conditions	.685	.293	.027	.050	.085	-.072	-.093	-.082	-.135	.023	.117	-.022	.074
Less Salary	.467	.327	.232	.032	.045	-.122	-.268	-.056	.018	-.100	.066	.075	.108
Reward	.381	.034	.171	-.390	-.211	.004	.295	-.032	-.098	-.217	.087	.283	.001
Without will	.219	.053	.002	.623	.007	.028	.106	.031	-.165	-.287	.059	-.137	.046
Adjustment	.664	.031	.009	.130	.203	.110	-.064	-.029	-.172	-.191	-.027	-.025	.043
Negative remark	-.183	.164	.119	-.185	-.240	-.175	-.259	.367	-.077	.067	.405	-.080	.127
Foreign guests pressure	.106	.127	.233	.595	-.109	.065	.152	.133	.157	.175	.055	.111	.003
Career Prospects	.045	.193	.013	-.024	-.036	.002	.081	.029	-.010	-.130	.002	-.088	.780
Job insecurity	.535	.185	.126	.017	-.053	-.024	-.112	.071	.303	.002	-.135	-.124	.178
Opportunities	-.009	.003	-.095	.177	.002	-.158	-.091	.730	.065	-.036	-.061	.183	.074
Suggestions	.108	.007	-.095	-.087	.699	-.034	-.022	.095	-.063	.164	.043	.043	.106
Democratic	.239	.652	-.155	.108	-.017	-.071	.113	-.097	-.073	.187	.026	.037	.054
Boring Job	.222	.709	.045	.042	.133	.037	-.084	.001	.085	.098	-.036	-.160	.099
Attention	.280	.057	.638	.174	.023	.027	-.047	.031	-.201	-.012	.176	-.041	.054

Choice	-.143	-.078	.112	-.071	.182	-.581	-.009	.028	-.339	.182	.129	.172	.063
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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a Rotation converged in 25 iterations.

Table 4

Summary of Factors

Factors of Variance (% of Variance)	Features/Attributes	Factor Loading
1. Working Conditions (8.25 %)	Working Conditions	0.685
	Adjustment	0.664
	Unable to carry out	0.592
	Job insecurity	0.535
2. Role Clarity (5.82 %)	Boring job	0.709
	Democratic	.652
	Not clear expectation	.569
3. Role Overload (5.27%)	Lot of work	.727
	Attention	.638
4. Attitude of Guests (4.57 %)	Without Will	.623
	Foreign guests pressure	.595
5. Participation (4.56 %)	Suggestions	.699
6. Social Status (4.25 %)	Social Status	.74
7. Respect (4.25%)	Respect at work	.726
8. Lack of Opportunities (4.22%)	Opportunities	.73
9. Team Spirit (4.13 %)	Team Spirit	.696
	Help Voluntarily	.602
10. Work of Others (3.98%)	Work of others	.763
11. Intrinsic Impoverishment (3.90%)	Opportunity to utilize	.611
12. Job Characteristics (3.89%)	Life Difficult	.522
13. Future Career Growth (3.80%)	Career Prospects	.78
	Don't Like	.534

Factor 1: Working Conditions

From the above analysis we could see that working condition is a major source of stress at the workplace. This is explained by 8.25 percent variance. It is revealed that poor working conditions lead to stressful situation.

Factor 2: Role Clarity

The Second most significant factor contributing occupational stress is lack of role clarity. This is explained by 5.82 percent variance. It is very important for employees to know the work expectation of their superiors.

Factor 3: Role Overload

The third most significant factor causing stress at the work place is role overload. This is explained by 5.27 percent variance. This show that volume of work beyond individual capacity can bring lot of stress.

Factor4: Attitude of Guests

The fourth most significant factor stressors at the work place is dealing with the guests. This is explained by 4.57 percent variance. It is very important for front line employees to satisfy their customers, otherwise negative comments can give stress to concern employee.

Factor 5: Participation

The fifth significant factor contributing stress at the workplace is lack of participation. This is explained by 4.56 percent variance. If employees are not getting enough opportunity to participate in work life, then such factor can bring stress.

Factor 6: Social Status

The sixth significant factor causing stress at the workplace is lack of social recognition for the job. This is explained by 4.25 percent variance. If employees getting inferior treatment from others because of low level job, then in such case it can bring stressful situation.

Factor 7: Respect

The seventh significant factor contributing stress at the work place is lack of respect from superiors and others. This is explained by 4.25 percent variance.

Factor 8: Lack of opportunities

The eighth prominent factor of stressor at the work place is lack of opportunities for employees to utilize their abilities. This is explained by 4.22 percent variance.

Factor 9: Team Spirit

The ninth factor causing stress at the workplace is absence of team spirit or team co-ordination. This is explained by 4.13 percent variance.

Factor 10: Work of Others

The tenth factor causing stress at the workplace is performing work of others. This is explained by 3.99 percent variance.

Factor 11: Intrinsic Impoverishment

The eleventh significant factor causing stress at the work place is intrinsic impoverishment. This is explained by 3.90 percent variance.

Factor 12: Job Characteristics

The twelfth significant factor causing stress at the work place is job characteristics. This is explained by 3.89 percent variance.

Factor 13: Future Career Growth

The thirteen significant factor causing stress at the workplace is future career growth. This is explained by 3.80 percent variance. If future career growth is uncertain then it can bring stress.

Coping Mechanism

Coping is individual's attempt behaviour that conducts to manage encountered problems or conditions that he perceived as threats in order to stop, relieve or reject (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Schuler, 1984). Coping behaviours may be directed externally or problem-focused and internally or emotion-focused. Problem-focused coping refers to efforts to manage, improve, or change the problem environment causing the stress, whilst emotion-focused coping refers to attempts, thoughts or actions which made to lessen emotional impact of stress (Bosworth, Bastian, Rimer, & Siegler, 2003). Examples of problem-focused coping include problem-solving activities, seeking information about what to do, holding back from impulsive and premature actions, and confronting difficulty. Whereas those of emotion-focused coping may include behaviours such as seeking others' company, cognitive responses such as denial of the true situation, and looking optimistically at the problem (Esther, Daly, Hancock, Bidewell, Johnson, Lambert, & Lambert, 2006).

Following coping mechanism are commonly used by lower level employees

Emotion Focused Coping	Problem Focused Coping
1. Prayer to God or Visit to religious places	1. Taking advice of colleagues
2. Waiting for Good time to come	2. Trying to clarify issue or problem associated with concern person
3. Avoiding social gathering	3. Changing behaviour or approach towards issue/person causing stress
4. Playing games	4. Setting Priorities in life
5. Listening to Music	

CONCLUSION

The present work culture of business organisations is highly competitive and stressful because of survival and stability. The hospitality sector which is known for 24 x 7 working system is also in racing track of competition. The work culture of hospitality sector creates lot of stress for employees working in this sector. The present study identified occupational stressor among lower level employees in hospitality sector. The following are the most significant stressors among employees such as Working Conditions, Role Clarity, Role Overload, Attitude of Guests, Lack of Participation, Lack of Social Status to Post, Lack of Respect, Lack of Opportunities, Absence of Team Spirit, Performing work of others, Intrinsic Impoverishment, Job Characteristics and Future career growth. These stressors bring lot of negativity among employees in terms of their behaviour and performance. The organisations adopt a lot of programme to manage stress because they don't want any kind of

negativity among employees in terms of their behaviour and performance, which in turn affect overall performance of the organisations. On the other hand, employees at their level try to cope with the stress, which is broadly classified into emotion focused and problem focused and are dependent on personality of the employees. The present study highlights that employees have used both emotion focused and problem focused coping mechanism. The study concludes that employees should use those coping mechanism which can give them best results.

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