

Distress among labourers: Effect of socio-economic and personal variables

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to assess the effect of socio-economic and personal variables on distress among labourers. The study was based upon a sample of 240 labourers (18 years and above in age) drawn in equal numbers from four randomly selected villages and four cycle manufacturing units of Ludhiana district. The results revealed that education and income level along with self esteem and social support were found to be significantly determining distress among local labourers irrespective of their being in agricultural or industrial sectors.

INTRODUCTION

Distress implies mental or physical strain imposed by pain, trouble, worry, or the like and usually suggest a state or situation that can be relieved. It occurs when an individual cannot adapt to stress. Stress is more due to psychological factors than physical factors (Ananthanaman, 2001). Psychological stress usually occurs when people consider situations difficult or unable to manage. Stress is believed to cause depression, irritation, anxiety, fatigue and thus lowers self-esteem and reduce job satisfaction (Manivannan *et al.*, 2007). Physical stress refers to a physical reaction of the body to various triggers. According to Cassel's theory of vulnerability, migration triggers secretion of stress hormones, *e.g.* adrenalin, noradrenalin and cortisol, thus upsetting the body's normal balance of hormones. The immune system will be affected and the risk of acquiring diseases will increase (Hjelm, 2002). How we cope with stress is primarily affected by how we perceive our own ability to handle a situation.

Migration is movement of people from one place of abode to another, either from one district to another or one state to another or to a different country altogether. Migration is a process of social change where an individual, alone or accompanied by others, because of one or more reasons of economic betterment, political upheaval, education or other purposes, leaves one geographical area for prolonged

stay or permanent settlement in another geographical area. It involves not only leaving social networks behind but also include experiencing at first a sense of loss, dislocation, alienation and isolation which puts extraordinary stress on individuals and their families (Bhugra, 2004).

Self-esteem is considered an important component of psychological health and it encompasses both self-confidence and self-acceptance. It is the global evaluative dimension of the self and also referred to as self-worth or self-image (Santrock, 1998). A low self-esteem for a prolonged period may cause emotional, mental and even physical problems. In the most aggravated form, it can lead to anxiety, stress or depression (Podder, 2007).

Another variable probably receiving most research attention as a potential moderator of the impact of stress is social support. As a protective factor for immigrants and their families, social support has an important position. Social support is external power resource arise from connections with people outside working environment available in the emotional or material form. A model given by Cohen and Wills (1985) suggests that social support produces a generalized positive effect on individuals. A large social network might provide more opportunities for positive experiences and help individuals to avoid negative ones. The present study aims at

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