

A study on occupational stress of females working in boutiques of Udaipur

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■ **ABSTRACT** : A study on occupational stress of 80 female boutique workers was conducted in Udaipur district during 2012-13. Occupational stress was assessed by occupational stress scale developed by House *et al.* (1979). The results revealed that cutting, stitching, surface embellishment, closure attachment, ironing and finishing related works were performed by female workers. Majority of respondents' encountered moderate to high occupational stress and work load stress was counted highly followed by job vs. non-job category. Near half of respondents earned less than Rs. 5000 per month and 39 per cent were illiterate and 44 per cent worked for 8-10 hours per day. Some suggestive measures were also discussed to uplift the condition of female workers including restructuring ergonomically approved working area. Psychological, physical, social and economic security should be provided to workers in order to empowering their skills and maximize their potential through networking with supporting agencies.

■ **KEY WORDS** : Occupational stress, Boutique, Ergonomic

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Textile industry has a place of pride in Indian economy. It has provided employment for millions of people. A textile industry is one of the informal sectors which have high working women population. The women are engaged in weaving, spinning, tailoring, ironing and many more unskilled jobs. Usually women earn very low wages because their payments depend in amount of acceptable pieces produced in a given time. Sareena *et al.* (1997) reported that women in textile industries are confronting with many problems such as stress from multiple roles, job characteristics, sexual harassment, threat of violence, ergonomic problems, exertion, effects of noise, chemicals as well as dust for longer period of exposure. These problems lead to musculo-skeletal aches, respiratory allergies, allergic to bronchitis, visual impairment and precipitate bronchitis, pulmonary tuberculosis or cardio-vascular disorders. The women workers in the informal sector work as piece rate workers, self-employed workers, paid workers in informal enterprises, unpaid workers in family business, casual

workers without fixed employers, sub-contract workers limited to formal enterprises.

Punnett *et al.* (1985) studied the impact of repetitive hand motion on experiencing body pain in 188 garment workers. The study documented that prevalence of persistent shoulder wrist and hand pain was significantly greater among garment workers. Workers in hand sewing and trimming suffered especially high prevalence of persistent pain in all upper limb sites. Stitchers had elevated rates of pain in shoulders, wrist and hands. Workers ironing by hand had a significant elevation in elbow pain rates.

Most of research studies have been concentrated on organized manufacturing units but no documentation was properly mentioned on small tailors and boutiques of small towns. Hence, the present study on was conducted in the Udaipur region with the objective to assess the occupational stress and features of employment along with personal characteristics and suggestive measures have been discussed for improving working conditions.

■ RESEARCH METHODS

Sample selection :

Eleven boutiques were selected from Udaipur district having more than 10 female workers. Purposive random sampling technique was used to select 80 female workers between 20 years to 60 years with more than 5 years of working experience.

Data collection:

Self-structured questionnaire was used for collection of personal information of the respondents. Occupational stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirement of the job not match the capability, resources or need of the workers (Sauter and Morphy, 1999). The occupational stress was measured by using Occupational Stress Scale developed by House *et al.* (1979). The scale has five components *viz.*, responsibility and pressure, quality concern, role conflict, job vs non-job conflict and work load.

■ RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study as well as relevant discussions have been presented under following sub heads:

Profile of boutiques in Udaipur :

Udaipur is especially reckoned for its expertise in art and crafts including exquisite woodcraft, traditional batik, hand prints and bandhani clothes, dyed saris, turbans, handicrafts, pottery items, wooden toys, puppets, miniature paintings. In Udaipur are more than 300 tailoring shops and near about 60 boutiques. 11 boutiques have good reputation among population; Traditional embroideries, tie and dye work, aari, gotta, kundan, jardozi and danka work along with pattern designing and stitching are performed by female workers in Boutiques. Majority of boutiques are unregistered as enterprise or manufacturing unit, on the other hand they work as retail outlet to save themselves from following of regulations of labour laws.

One boutique named Sadhna, a women's handicraft enterprise, unit of Seva Mandir, established in 1988, a huge selection of clothing and accessories are made by members of Sadhna for national and international market has also been included in research work (Sadhna Annual Report, 2012-13).

Some boutiques have specialized industrial machine and they bounded workers to stay at workplace for quality work and some facilitate home based job. Working space constraints, lack of skilled workers and irregularity in commitment, readymade industry, and mass customization were common problems discussed by boutique owners. It was observed that outlet area was properly decorated and comfortable to visitors but working area was not appropriate and 7 out of 11 boutique owners didn't allow entering in

working area due to privacy reason.

Personal characteristics :

The personal characteristics of the respondents' *viz.*, age, educational level, marital status, monthly income, work experience and duration of work per day were collected by personal interview which are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Component detail of occupational stress scale

Sr. No.	Component	Measures
1.	Responsibility and pressure	How often the workers are bothered by responsibility and pressure
2.	Quality concern	How much the workers are bothered about quality of the product
3.	Role conflict	How the worker suffering from stress due to social relations and botheration about relation with authority and his colleagues
4.	Job vs non-job	How much the worker is suffering from the stress due to job vs non-job conflict
5.	Work load	How much work load created stress for workers

It has been observed from Table 1 that 67.5 per cent respondents were between 30 to 60 year and 38.75 per cent were illiterate. Only 3.75 per cent were graduate workers. As many as 65 per cent of the respondents were married but 11.25 per cent lost their partners while 8.75 per cent were separated from their husband and 15 per cent of the respondents were not married. Nearly half respondents received up to Rs. 5000, 30 per cent got Rs. 5000 to 10000 as their monthly income and only 18.75 per cent received more than Rs. 10000 It has been reported that 61.25 per cent respondents had more than 5 years working experience in comparison to 8.75 per cent had more than 15 year experience. Women working in boutiques were engaged in cutting (11.25%), stitching (65%), surface embellishment (21.25%), closure attachment (10%) and ironing and finishing task (3.75%). It is clearly indicated that 43.75 per cent were doing work for 8-10 hours per day and only 3.75 per cent were working for 10-12 hour per day. Workers received wages depending on number of acceptable pieces. Hence, every respondent irrespective of age, education, income and work experience desires to earn more money per day. Therefore, it calls for more effort in producing acceptable pieces, which create occupational stress in the workers. It has been observed that respondents didn't have much formal education but the one skill they possessed was sewing and mastery in surface enrichment techniques.

It is apparent from Table 3 that 17.5 had written job contract whereas 35 per cent has no written agreement and similar percentage of respondents gave no comment, only 12.5 per cent stated that job contract was done according to nature of work. About 36.25 per cent took benefit of paid

Table 2 : Personal profile of female respondents (n=80)

Sr.No.	Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age	18-30 years	26	32.50
		30-60 years	54	67.50
2.	Education	Illiterate	31	38.75
		Primary	21	26.25
		Up to 5th	12	15.00
		Secondary	9	11.25
		Sr. Secondary	6	7.50
		Graduate	3	3.75
3.	Marital status	Widow	9	11.25
		Divorced	7	8.75
		Unmarried	12	15.00
		Married	52	65.00
4.	Family income (per month)	Less than 5,000	41	51.25
		5000- 10000	24	30.00
		More than 10000	15	18.75
5.	Work experience	6-10 year	49	61.25
		10-15 year	24	30.00
		More than 15 years	7	8.75
6.	Type of work	Cutting	9	11.25
		Stitching	52	65.00
		Surface embellishment	17	21.25
		Closure attachment	8	10.00
		Ironing and finishing	3	3.75
7.	Duration of work (per day)	4 -6 hours	14	17.50
		6 -8 hours	28	35.00
		8 -10 hours	35	43.75
		10 -12 hours	3	3.75

leave on behalf of good performance, 21.25 per cent refused and 10 per cent gave no comment regarding paid leave. It was observed that 57.5 per cent respondents agreed with continuity of salary they received whereas 23.75 per cent didn't get payment on time. It was pointed out that only 3.75

per cent respondents agreed that their boutiques followed labour laws, majority of them (51.25%) stated that they worked without any formal regulations and governance, boutique owner had all related rights and creator of rules according to his/her benefits and 22.5 per cent gave no comment and same were in between and uncertain about the seriousness of issue. 27.5 per cent agreed that they have freedom of working hours as they worked on piece basis, similar percentage was uncertain and gave no response, 17.5 per cent stated that they didn't get flexible working hours and they worked according to boutique schedule.

Result of Table 4 show occupational stress among the respondents which cover both work related and non-work related stressors. It was pointed out that 45 per cent showed medium occupational stress followed by high (30%) and 25 per cent expressed low stress. In case of responsibility pressure around half of the respondents (51.25%) showed moderate stress. On the other hand, majority of the respondents documented high stress in job vs non-job (61.25%) and workload component (63.75%) followed by medium (21.25- 28.75%) and very low ranging from 7.50 to 17.50 per cent in low stress. Similar result was reported by Bhatia and Kumar (2005) that workers of the textile industries in Bhiwani suffered from high occupational stress causing detrimental effects on well being. Another study revealed that noise pressure in the textile industries increased the oxidative stress and also affected hearing capacity of 66.6 per cent workers (Yildirim *et al.*, 2007). Occupational stress arises mainly due to occupational environment including physical and psychological conditions of the work place. It is also a known fact that personal characteristics of the workers *viz.*, age, educational level, income and work experience too have impact on occupational stress level. Other than questionnaire, respondents complained about uncomfortable postures with respect to ergonomical and physical problems. Muscle fatigue, neck pain, shoulder pain, lower back pain and temporary upper back pain were reported

Table 3: Features of employment of female workers of boutiques (n=80)

Features	Agree	Disagree	In-between	No comment
Written job contract	14 (17.5)	28 (35)	10 (12.5)	28 (35)
Paid leave	29 (36.25)	17 (21.25)	26 (32.5)	8 (10)
Regular monthly salary / payment on work basis	46 (57.5)	19 (23.75)	14 (17.5)	1 (1.25)
Follows labour laws/company regulation act	3 (3.75)	41 (51.25)	18 (22.5)	18 (22.5)
Flexible working hours	22 (27.5)	14 (17.5)	22 (27.5)	22 (27.5)

Table 4 : Scores of occupational stress scale of female workers (n=80)

Category	Responsibility pressure (RP)	Quality concern (QC)	Role conflict (RC)	Job vs non- job (JNJ)	Work load (WL)	Over all occupational stress
Low	22 (27.50)	14 (17.50)	19 (23.75)	14 (17.50)	6 (7.50)	20 (25.00)
Medium	41 (51.25)	28 (35.00)	38 (47.50)	17 (21.25)	23 (28.75)	36 (45.00)
High	17 (21.25)	38 (47.50)	23 (28.75)	49 (61.25)	51 (63.75)	24 (30)

by female workers. The ergonomical observation of work place confirmed the fact that furniture, light, air-ventilation, temperature, privacy and noise level was not properly maintained in working areas and it directly affects production potential of working females. In this investigation, respondents expressed fear of layoff, fears that the complaint might lead to changes in their job tasks, uncertainty about how co-workers and owners might perceive them.

Suggestive measures :

It is very difficult to fight against occupational stress but by defining, assessing and implementing safety measures, proper training and investment in good infrastructure directly refer to boost productivity. Workplace layout needs ongoing attention to deal with inadequacies, which become evident in the process of dealing with changes in the type of work being done (Ergonomic challenges, 2005). During research the following suggestive measures were discussed with boutique owners and workers :

- Proper light, good ventilation and water facility with basic amenities should be provided on priority basis in working area.
- Good quality machines having less noise should be preferred, otherwise good earmuffs should be provided to workers.
- Ergonomically designed benches, chair and other furnitures should be promoted in working areas.
- All electric cords and other wires should be properly placed in working area, good flooring, mildew proof walls should be encouraged.
- Initial investment in good design will pay for itself in increased efficiency, worker satisfaction and loyalty and at last good profit.
- Healthy working situations, healthy living habits would be practiced and regularized that will ensure profit of organization in long run.
- Social, psychological, economic and health security should be provided to workers by networking with Government and non-government organizations to reduce the occupational stress.

Conclusion :

It has been assessed during research that female

workers have maximum complains related to ergonomic layout of working area. Old machines' noise causes hearing problems and eyestrain during work causes vision problems. Lack of appropriate privacy affected work performance of female workers in presence of male workers. Monotonous work, constant time pressure, low salary, poor infrastructure, superiority of boutique owner were other problems encountered by female workers working in small working units which created occupational stress. Joint efforts of boutique owners and workers may restructure working areas and policies in organized manner that directly offers long run profits.

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