Work related Stress of Garment Workers in Bangladesh

M. S. Rahman*

Department of Occupational & Environmental health, NIPSOM, Mohakhali, Dhaka.

Abstract

The export-oriented Garment sector has made crucial contribution to the transformation of the Bangladesh economy. The number of garment industry is now about 5560 and provides employment to as many as 5.0 million workers. Job stress is one of the common problems that employees confront with increasing frequency. Recently job stress is becoming an epidemic in the work environment. This cross sectional study was carried out on a sample of 418 garment workers selected by non-probability sampling technique from two garment factories. The study was done from 1st July 2021 to 30th June 2022 with an objective to assess the level of job stress and related factors in garment workers. Job stress was estimated by using Occupational stress index (OSI) questionnaire; while socio-demographic, behavioral and work related information were obtained using semi structured questionnaire. Among 418 respondents, 71% were female and 21% were male, their mean age was 29.35±6.185 & they were mostly married (72%). 45.2% had no formal education The mean family income and individual income were Tk.13181.07±4826.598 & Tk.6812.10±1029.504 respectively. Among the respondents, 64.4% belong to cutting/sewing section, 79.2% of them were employed for 1 to 5 years & mean duration of employment was 3.78±3.083 years. Among respondents, 69.9% had moderate stress followed by 17% having low stress and 13.2 % with high stress. Among 12 subscale the mean scores of under participation (mean score = 4.33) and responsibility for person (mean score =4.22) was higher. It was found that monthly income and compulsory work over time produce odds ratio 0.401, 11.963 respectively. This indicates every additional unit of monthly income, respondents were 0.401 times less likely to develop job stress (OR=.401) and every additional unit of compulsory overtime, respondents were 11.963 times more likely to develop job stress (OR=11.963). There was a significant association of job stress and gender, smoking habit, monthly income and work overtime. Measures to be taken to alleviate these stressors which can promote the worker in greater contribution in their profession.

Keywords: Work related stree, Garments workers

Introduction

The readymade industrial sector has been considered as a growth driver as countries have moved from low- to-middle income status. Bangladesh is a country having a small land but high population density. Once a time this country was moving to prosperity though agricultural growth alone. Industrial productivity is higher than agriculture. The industrial sector provides high wage employment for number of workers who are moving out of agriculture into garment industry. This sector can also raise social productivity by producing high-value goods on a large scale. The developing country can also earn foreign currency

*Corresponding author e-mail: rahmanshafiur1971@gmail.com

by exporting manufactured products (Yunus and Yamagata, 2012). In Bangladesh, the garment industry drives the country's economic growth, contributing to an impressive 6% growth rate for nearly a decade.

Bangladesh's Readymade Garments (RMG) industry is well-known throughout the world for its high caliber of output and substantial employment of women. We have witnessed Bangladesh's reliance on the garment industry increasing over several decades. There were roughly 50 clothing factories in the nation in 1983. This figure has increased to 4,000 in 2004. Bangladesh has over 5,500 clothing industries as of early 2020. About 5.2 million people are employed in this industry at the moment, with nearly 80% of them being women (Mridula and Khan, 2009).

Job stress is not a new phenomenon now-a-days. It is a great threat to the employee. While technology has made aspects of many job are easier, but it has also added anxieties to the life of a worker. Job stress is generally defined as follows: "job stress" generally refers to a situation in which a worker's psychological and/or physiological condition is altered by job-related factors, forcing them to deviate from their normal functioning i.e., alter, enhance, or disrupt it etc. (Beehr and Newman, 1978).

As Stress at work has become a common occurrence in modern life. It has a significant impact on how workers behave and adjust both on and off the job. Because of this, there is a far greater demand than ever before for comprehensive research on stress in organizational settings. An important area of organization research is the examination of work-related stress.

Garment sector is the one in which workers are highly affected by job stress due to many factors such job uncertainty, long working hours, work overloads, lack of administrative supports and work-life balance. So the purpose of the study is to assess the level of job stress of garment workers and factors related to it. Therefore, the employers are supposed to identify the symptoms of job stress and must have the necessary knowledge and skills for managing and reducing the stress level of its

employees before the organization itself becomes endangered.

In Bangladesh, the garment industry is the main source of foreign exchange and the ultimate resource. This industry not only contributes to our own progress but also strengthens international relations. Bangladesh's economy largely depends on Readymade Garments Industry.

The garment workers carried out on a number of benefits, including a good wage, opportunities for advancement, a provident fund, housing, and allowances. Their awful way of life prevents them from meeting their family members' basic necessities. Not only that, working pattern, work environment, lower wages, working hour, job insecurity, family life, overtime, income and other stressor are creating them in stressful condition and they are facing both mental and physical problems.

Not only does workplace stress affect an employee's effectiveness on the job, but a heavy workload and insufficient pay are other factors that might have an impact.

In light of the aforementioned situation, the current study on textile workers aims to determine the degree of job stress experienced by Bangladeshi garment workers at work as well as the elements that contribute to this stress. Many studies have been conducted in this field in developed nations, but relatively few have been conducted in Bangladesh. The study's conclusions would be useful in the real world, and it would add to our understanding of the causes and consequences of occupational stress in garment workers. As a result, this study will assist us in providing the crucial information those governments, non-governmental organizations, sociologists, psychologists, mental health professionals, and policy makers need to take appropriate action to support the emergence of "garment workers."

Job stress in industrial sector is crucial in every time in Bangladesh as well as other developing countries in the world. Some literature clearly pointed out of job stress that had an integral role to perform this research work.

To assess and evaluate the stress levels of industrial workers in China and Hong Kong, a comparison study was carried out in Hong Kong. 238 workers from Hong Kong and 342 factory workers from China made up the study's samples. As a research tool, the Occupational Stress Indicator, Version 2 (OSI 2) was employed. The findings indicate that, according to the t-test, "intrinsic to the job" caused stress in Chinese workers more than in Hong Kong workers (t-4.05, p<0.0005), and that support was a coping strategy that Hong Kong workers used more frequently than Chinese workers (t=2.46, p<0.01). The two groups' logical relationship between job happiness and physical and mental health has offered support. (Sui, 1996)

A survey was carried out among machine operators at a reputable clothing company in Sri Lanka. Finding the relationship between the independent variable (work stress) and the dependent variable (turnover intention) was the aim of this study. A self-administered questionnaire with 23 questions and a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" was used to collect data for this mixed-method study. Furthermore, ten resigned employees participated in structured interviews to gather data. The majority of machine operators have significant levels of job stress, as indicated by the conclusion that job stress has a favorable impact on turnover intention. Additionally, this study backed up the idea that managers of clothing companies should adopt a strategic. (Sewwandi and Perere, 2016).

Materials And Methods

This was a cross sectional study in knitting industries. Among 418 garments workers, 296 were female and 122 were male. 260 workers were from the garment situated in Mirpur and 158 workers were from the garment situated in South Kamlapur. A structured questionnaire was used to collect information on socio-demographic characteristics and work related stress was measured by Occupational stress scale.

Results and discussion

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by Level of job stress

Job stress level	Frequency	Percent
Low stress (46-122)	71	17.0
Moderate stress (123-155)	292	69.9
High stress (156-230)	55	13.2
Total	418	100.0

*Percentages in parenthesis

Above table shows distribution of the respondents by job stress. Among respondents, 69.9% had moderate stress followed by 17% having low stress and 13.2 % with high stress.

From above socio demographic characteristics the maximum and minimum job stress score in terms of age classification, the maximum stress was 184 for age group 19-29, whereas minimum stress stands 88 for age group 30-40. There was no significant association (p>.05) in terms of age group.

On the other hand , the maximum stress score was 184 for workers who have 5-8 family members and minimum stress score was 88 with the family members of more than or equal 9 among workers. There was no significant difference (p>.05) of stress in terms of family members.

For educational qualification, the maximum stress score was 184 among the worker who had primary education and minimum stress score was 88 among the worker who had done SSC/HSC/Others. Post Hoc test shows that the Occupational stress score mean of workers who had no formal education was significantly different (p<.05) from the mean of workers who had done SSC/HSC/others.

On the other hand, the maximum stress score was 184 and minimum score was 92 for workers with family income of Tk.5000- 9999. There was no significant difference in terms of stress and monthly family income.

Table 2. Comparison of socio demographic characteristics by occupational stress score

Characteristics		Stress score*			Test of significance
		Mean ± SD	Minimum	Maximum	
Age group	19-29	140.20 ± 16.279	89	184	F= .940 p= .391
	30-40	137.84 ± 18.465	88	183	
	>40	138.57 ± 20.387	100	163	
	Total	139.06 ± 17.406	88	184	
Family size	1-4	138.70 ± 18.371	89	179	F=.568 p= .567
	5-8	139.02 ± 16.556	91	184	
	≥8	143.16 ± 16.402	88	161	
	Total	139.06 ± 17.406	88	184	
Educational qualification	No formal education	141.18 ± 16.560	97	179	F=3.878 p =.021
	Primary	138.56 ± 16.764	89	184	
	SSC/HSC/Others	134.71±19.957*	88	172	
	Overall	139.06±17.406	88	184	
Family income	5000-9999	141.23±16.922	92	184	F=.741 p=.544
	10000-14999	138.07±17.185	89	179	
	15000-19999	138.55±16.458	91	172	
	≥20000	138.81±22.763	88	172	
	Total	139.06±17.406	88	184	

*The mean difference is significant at .05 level

Table 3. Comparison of occupational stress score by work related factors

Characteristics		Stress score*			Test of significance
		Mean ± SD	Minimum	Maximum	
Designation	Helper/operator	139.06±15.683	91	172	F =.045 p= .956
	Cutter/folder	139.49±17.451	89	172	
	Ironman/packer/QI	138.74±20.358	88	184	
	Total	139.06±17.406	88	184	
Working section	Cutting/sewing	139.09±15.771	91	172	F= .134 p= .875
	Quality/finishing	138.50±18.028	88	172	
	Packing/store	140.08±24.012	94	184	
	Total	139.06±17.406	88	184	
Duration of employment	1 – 5	139.49±17.052	89	184	F= .618 p= .539
	6 – 10	137.81±18.524	88	172	
	>10	135.00±20.48	100	165	
	Total	139.06±17.406	88	184	

*The mean difference is significant at .05 level

Among the respondents, in terms of designation of workers ,the maximum stress score was 184 for iron man /packer /quality inspector and minimum score was 88.There was no significant difference (p>.05) in job stress score for four group of designation of workers.

In terms of working section, the maximum stress score was 184 for packing and store section where minimum stress score was 88 for quality and finishing section. There was no significant difference (p>.05) in occupational stress score for working section.

The maximum stress score 184 found for the workers who had worked for 1- 5 years and the minimum stress score 88 for workers who worked for 6- 10 years. There was no significant difference (p>.05) in occupational stress score.

Discussion

This was a cross sectional study designed and conducted in two ready-made garment factory of Dhaka city with the objective of assessing the level of job stress and related factors in garment worker.

When the job stress score was estimated, this study showed that occupational stress score varied from 46 to 230.Mean score was 139.06±17.41, maximum score was 184 and minimum score was 88. From occupational stress score values 46-122 indicates low stress,123-155 indicates moderate stress and 156-230 indicates high stress. About 69.9% respondents had moderate stress whereas 17.0% belonged to low stress and 13.2% workers belonged to high stress category. Similar study of Lim (2013) done on business process outsourcing industry in Singapore. In the current study to simplify the data job stress level was grouped into two levels, they were low stress level and moderate-high stress level. So, 17% had low stress level where as majority (83.0%) of respondents belonged to moderate-high job stress level. In another study in western region of Ghana, they showed that 20.9% employees recorded low levels of occupational stress, 32.9% were moderately stressed and 46.2% were highly stressed. Majority of the respondents belonged to moderate-high stress level (Affum-Osei et al., 2014).

Association between Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Job stress

In terms of sex, the maximum and minimum stress score 91 and 184 for female and for male the minimum score was 88 and maximum score was 183. High stress was found to be more prevalent (86.8%) in female than the male. There was a significant association (p<0.05) between gender and occupational stress score. In another study they showed that in a total of 105 male employees, 25 (23.8%) recorded low stress levels, 33 (31.4%) were moderately stressed and 47 (44.8%) were highly stressed. The female employees were 120, out of which 22 (18.3%) had low stress level, 41 (34.2%) had moderate stress level and 57 (47.5%) had high stress levels (Affum-Osei et al., 2014).

Association between work-related factor and job stress

In this study, the maximum stress was 184 for iron man /packer /quality inspector and minimum score was 88. There was no significant difference (p>.05) in job stress score for groups of designation of workers.

In terms of working section, the maximum stress score was 184 for packing and store section where minimum stress score was 88 for quality and finishing section. There was no significant difference (p>.05) in occupational stress score for working section and no significant mean difference in groups of working section.

Job stress was prevalent among the garment workers. About two third of workers belonged to moderate-high job stress. High stress was found more in females than males. Among respondents 19-29 age group had more moderate-high stress. Workers with monthly income Tk. 5000-6999 had more job stress. Every additional unit of compulsory overtime, workers were 11.963 times more likely to develop job stress and every additional unit of monthly income, respondents were 0.401 times less likely to develop job stress.

Role ambiguity, under participation, responsibility for person and powerlessness were the contributors of job stress.

Conclusion: There is a significant association of job stress of garment workers with gender, smoking habit, monthly income and overtime. Measures to

be taken to alleviate these stressors of workers which can promote their greater contribution.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations were made with specific indication to research, education, and practice:

Proper work place policy to ensure the basic rights of garments workers.

Proper enforcement of existing labour code and improvement of labour inspections at factory level.

Organize extensive workers education and training activity in the area of labour law.

Stress reduction program should be designed and implemented for workers.

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