

A Study on Occupational Stress among Public Road Transport Sector Employees: Special Reference to KSRTC

Gisha Thomas ^{*1} & D. Venkadesh ²

¹ Research Scholar, Dept. of Commerce, AVVM Sripushpam College, Tanjavur, India, Orcid-ID: 0009-0001-1049-9314; E-mail: gishathomasthalappanadu@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Dept. of Commerce, AVVM Sripushpam College, Tanjavur, India, Orcid-ID: 0009-0005-3939-5198; E-mail: prof.d.venkadesh@gmail.com

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² Assistant Professor, Dept. of Commerce, AVVM Sripushpam College, Tanjavur, India, Orcid-ID: 0009-0005-3939-5198; E-mail: prof.d.venkadesh@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Purpose: *This research investigates the effect of occupational stress on employees of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC), with a focus on figuring out the stress elements, their influence on employees' well-being, and the resulting outcomes on job performance. KSRTC employees are experiencing excessive ranges of occupational stress due to excessive workload, irregular work shifts, absence of job security, limited decision-making authority, and delayed salaries. Understanding these stressors is essential to offer insights into enhancing organizational culture, worker welfare, and sustainable overall performance.*

Design/Methodology: *This research paper applies a quantitative approach using survey-based data collection. The questionnaire was administered to KSRTC employees across different departments of Kottayam Depot using a convenience sampling method. Measurement scales for variables such as workload, time pressure, work control, decision authority, and job performance have been adapted from earlier literature and assessed on a five-point Likert scale. Information was analyzed using SPSS 23, using Exploratory factor analysis, Reliability test, Correlation, ANOVA, independent t-test, and multiple Regression to determine relationships between occupational stressors and performance outcomes.*

Findings/Result: *The findings reveal that all identified factors—workload, time pressure, work control, decision authority, and job performance—positively and significantly contribute to occupational stress amongst KSRTC employees. Amongst them, decision authority emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .368$, $p = .001$), followed by workload, work control, job performance, and time pressure. Correlation analysis confirmed strong positive relationships, with decision authority showing the highest correlation ($r = .701$) and time pressure the lowest ($r = .465$). ANOVA results indicated that the regression-model was a good fit, validating the predictive impact of stressors on occupational stress. Independent t-test results suggested that, except for job performance ($p = .046$), other stress factors did not fluctuate substantially across demographic groups, implying that occupational stress is a widespread issue among KSRTC personnel.*

Originality/Value: *This study contributes to the confined literature on occupational stress in India's public transport sector, especially KSRTC, which plays an important role in Kerala's economy and mobility. By analyzing both organizational and job-related stressors, the study gives sensible insights for policymakers and organizational leaders to design stress management strategies, enhance decision-making authority, and improve employee welfare programs. The findings highlight the significance of balancing operational needs with workers well-being to ensure organizational sustainability.*

Paper Type: Empirical Research.

Keywords: Occupational Stress, Workload, Time Pressure, Decision Authority, Job Performance, KSRTC Employees, Organizational Stressors, Employee Well-being.

1. INTRODUCTION :

Stress is defined differently for different situations. It's far from the non-responsiveness of the mind or body to a demand. Stress has a disastrous effect on humans. It not only harms the body but also influences the mental fitness and character of the person. Most humans spend the majority of their time in a work environment. Stress also causes damage to their working life. It is known as occupational stress. It is the process in which stressors in the work environment lead to strain on the psychological and behavioral patterns of employees and cause long-term health issues.

Any type of change that happens to physical, mental, or emotional strain can be considered as stress. If it is related to a job, it can be considered job stress. There are many reasons for job stress. It depends upon the nature of the work, the needs of the worker, the resources of the organization, and even the capabilities required to complete the job. Studies reveal that more than 90% of Indian professionals were reported to have been exposed to stress in one way or another [1]. According to a LinkedIn report [2] in 2021, 55% of the employed professionals are feeling stress at work. As per that report, balancing work with personal needs, insufficient income, and slow career advancement are the major stressors of work.

Many studies have been conducted to probe the reasons for job stress. Most of them find that anxiety and work pressure are the main reasons for stress. However, the extent to which people believe that they have control over their lives is the main source of stress [3]. If the employees are too much controlled by the organization by the way of achieving targets or work pressure, etc., they feel frustrated and lose their dignity. This is a major cause of stress in an organization. Employees are commonly under high pressure when they are not able to do or are unable to adjust to the work environment. As the modern corporate world is a highly competitive one, employees are under too much pressure at work. It affects the attitude and perception they carry. If they have a negative attitude towards a situation, they feel stressed. But if they have a positive attitude, it generates Eustress (Singh (2018). [4]). So it is important for every organization to create and maintain a good corporate culture where a positive attitude among employees should be generated.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM :

The employees of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) are currently working under highly stressful conditions due to multiple organizational and job-related factors. The corporation, despite its long tradition of service in the state, is facing a severe financial crisis marked by a shortage of drivers, delayed or non-payment of salaries, large-scale dismissal of empanelled workers, aggressive trade unionism, inefficient management, and constant political interventions. Such issues, combined with heavy workload, time pressure, limited work control, and lack of decision authority, have created an environment of occupational stress that not only affects the mental and physical fitness of employees but also undermines their overall job performance. Therefore, it is essential to identify the factors contributing to stress among KSRTC employees and analyze how these stressors impact their occupational stress and performance.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY :

Job stress is a factor that affects the well-being of employees and reduces organizational performance. Stress is a universal phenomenon, and no sector of work is excluded from it. Stress depends upon the nature of the job and the pressure that every employee feels in it. Kerala's transport sector, especially the road transport sector controlled by KSRTC serves a predominant position in serving people. Currently, they have 661 schedules with a route length of 17822 km. Despite the tradition it carries and the services it provides, today, they are facing a large financial crisis. The Hindu reported that the major crisis faced by the KSRTC is the shortage of drivers and nonpayment of salaries of personnel [5]. Torpid work force, detached and unproductive management, absence of foresight in leadership, and political interventions have also been reported as the reasons for the present crisis of KSRTC [6]. Recently, they dismissed around 3,800 empanelled workers from the job [7]. Most of the employees are not getting their salaries and other benefits on time. This all makes the working conditions hard for employees, which is considered one as the factors of stress. This all makes the working conditions hard for employees. Eventually, it becomes the cause of occupational stress among workers. The present study analyses the factors which cause work stress among the employees of Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) and how it affects their job performance.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

The level of stress is high for transport sector employees. The matter of road safety comes first to them. It is evident that, according to the increase in technological sophistication in the transportation sector, the number of accidents is also relatively high [8]. The pressure on employees can be correlated with the stress, especially on drivers. Another tough movement from the management of most of the transport sector is the tight work schedule for their employees. In Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC), which is the largest transportation service provider in Kerala, employees were assigned a very long work schedule as they have to work for more than twelve hours a day [9]. This Work overload can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion of employees. KSRTC employees are left in the dark as they are facing a minimum two-month delay in the disbursement of their salaries. This led them to call for strikes and protests against the management [10]. An unsatisfactory employee experience always invites stress in work life. Workload can be defined as the amount of work that an employee has to do. It is a stressor only when the actual quantity of work exceeds the individual's perception of workload. Workload has two factors. First is the quantitative factor, which is the amount of work to be done, and the qualitative factor is the level of difficulty of the work. Employees are burdened with excessive workloads and impractical deadlines, leaving them feeling hurried, stressed, and overwhelmed [11]. In this research, workload is understood as Excessive demand of work from management, long duration of work, and Tough tasks.

Time Pressure is a factor of stress that occurs when a person feels that he is not getting enough time to complete their task. This may be related to work overload. If the work is overwhelming, the person needs to work hard to complete it within the time limit, which can cause stress. Time constraints hinder the cognitive processes essential for fostering creativity within organizations [12]. It is negatively impacting the productivity of the employees. For the research, working overtime, lesser time to finish the job, long shifts, and short breaks were identified as the time pressure variables. A low level of job control, where there is a high demand for the job, can lead to job stress. Employees may be unable to control the work that they do [13]. It may be due to several factors, such as skill discretion, lack of appreciation, office policies, difficulty in the job delegation, no changes from the management regarding job design, etc., which makes the employees feel that they are out of control.

Employee stress is affected by several external decision-making aspects [14]. It depends on the way they are forced to do things as per the decision of the authority. Legitimate Power may often compel the employees to attain their targets on time, which makes them nervous and over-anxious. No participation decision making, restriction on behavior, lack of effective consultation, work planning, clarity of goal formulation, available time, and favoritism are some of the causes that contribute to stress among workers. Most of the employees believe that poor work performance is a reasonable cause to terminate them. Employees are always conscious of their underperformance. They believe that non-improvement will lead to dismissal. They will try to achieve higher goals. That will lead to physical and mental ill health. Role conflict, poor physical condition, fear of job loss, and difficulty in achieving targets are some of the causes of stress related to job performance.

Occupational stress reflects how sources of stress influence employees' performance. It studies the ways in which stressors can lead to psychological, behavioral, or physiologic manifestations of stress [15]. It refers to the stress experienced by an individual because of work pressure, excessive workload, mental and emotional elements, and diverse other causes [16]. By the nature of the job, most of the employees are forced to work in a stressful and demanding work environment. They are not getting adequate professional supervision and/or clinical guidance to address the job-related issues [17]. This causes stress and burnout. Elevated occupational stress is related to a higher chance of physical accidents, cardiovascular situations, hypertension, depression, and adverse non-public behaviors [18]. Job stress will also lead to job dissatisfaction, low morale, and workplace conflict that eventually affects the organization by way of poor productivity.

Road transport is the largest public transportation sector in Kerala. Road infrastructure of Kerala accounts for 4.2% of the total road length in India. The average road per thousand people in Kerala is 4.6 kilometers, which is much greater than the national mean of 2.59 kilometers [19]. Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC), a state-owned Transport Corporation, is managing the public road transportation sector in Kerala. It is one of the oldest state-run public bus transport services in India. They have more than thirty-five thousand employees working under different departments [20]. However, it is a fact that the KSRTC is having a huge financial crisis right now. Most of the employees

have not received their salary for at least one month. This financial crisis compels KSRTC to cut off several schedules and staff. This worsens the situation as current employees need to work overtime. It is reported that most of the employees are not satisfied with the working conditions, and they are having more occupational stress [21].

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

- (1) Identify the factors contributing to stress among KSRTC employees.
- (2) Analyzing the impact of job stressors on occupational stress among employees.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

(a) Data collection:

The unit of analysis in this research paper was KSRTC employees in the study area. The questionnaire was distributed through virtual mode and focused on those who are working in different departments of KSRTC Kottayam Depot. A convenient sampling method was used to collect data.

(b) Measurement Scales:

The survey questions had been derived from established literature and assessed using a 5-factor Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree), as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Measurement Scales

Scale	Number of questions	Literature
Workload	4	[22]
Time Pressure	4	[23]
Work Control	6	[24]
Decision authority	8	[25]
Job Performance	4	[26]

7. RESULT & ANALYSIS :

The facts analysis was completed using SPSS [23]. The questionnaire responses were coded, entered into the software, and checked for missing values and inconsistencies. To study the relationships amongst variables, Exploratory factor analysis and Reliability testing were performed. Additionally, statistical techniques such as correlation and the independent Samples test have been implemented for further analysis.

Principal Component Analysis was used to perceive patterns of relationships among the variables. To enhance interpretability, the Varimax [27] rotation method was applied under the assumption that the factors are uncorrelated. The results of the factor analysis, along with the reliability coefficients of the independent variables, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Factor Analysis and Reliability Coefficient of Independent Variables

Scale	Number of questions	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha
Workload	Demanding Too Much	.763	.836
	High targets	.744	
	Tough task	.711	
Time Pressure	Work overtime	.688	.769
	Lesser time to finish the job	.642	
	Long shift	.588	
	Short breaks	.532	
Work Control	Skill Discretion	.754	.774
	Lack of appreciation	.708	
	Office policies	.702	
	Difficulty inn delegation	.699	

	conflicts	.677	
	No Changes	.585	
Decision authority	No participative decision	.835	.854
	Restriction on Behavior	.812	
	Lack of effective consultation	.799	
	Work planning	.789	
	Clarity of goal formulation	.754	
	Available time	.745	
	Favoritism	.712	
Job Performance	Lack of responsibility	.710	.712
	Role conflict	.687	
	Poor physical condition	.655	
	Fear of job loss	.632	
	Difficulty in achieving targets	.585	

The identified factors included workload, time pressure, work control, decision authority, and job performance. For these six independent variables, the KMO value was 0.830 [28], and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (BTS) was significant at $< .05$ (Sig. = .000), confirming the factorability of the correlation matrix. The factor loadings ranged from .532 to .904, while Cronbach’s Alpha values varied between .712 and .854, demonstrating strong validity of the variables [29]. For the dependent variables, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.814, and BTS was also significant at $< .05$ (Sig. = .000), further supporting the suitability of factor analysis. The factor loadings ranged from .585 to .835, with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.814, again indicating good validity of the variables, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Factor Analysis and Reliability Coefficient of Independent Variables

Scale	Number of questions	Factor Loadings	Cronbach’s Alpha
Occupational Stress	Depression	.768	.814
	Mental Injury	.752	
	Poor relationship	.744	
	Burn out	.728	
	Physical Damage	.689	

Table 4 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. It can be observed that the majority of the respondents are male (77%). When we consider department status, most of the respondents are working in groups such as operational staff (66%), 22% respondents are working in the mechanical section, and 12% respondents are from the administrative section. It is also revealed from the table that most of the respondents have moderate or high stress exposure.

Table 4: Demographics of the respondents (N=300)

	F	Percentage
Gender		
Male (R ₁)	232	77
Female (R ₂)	68	23
Departmental Status		
Administrative	36	12
Mechanical	65	22
Workers	199	66

Stress Exposure		
Very much Stress(8-10 scale)	103	34
Fairly much (6-8scale)	77	26
Moderate stress (4-6 scale)	93	31
A little stress (2-3 scale)	18	6
Very low stress (0-1 scale)	9	3

The association and impact of the five factors on the dependent variable are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Correlation between Variables

Occupational Stress	1	2	3	4	
Workload	.687*	1.000			
Time Pressure	.465*	.641*	1.000		
Work Control	.477*	.824*	.532*	1.000	
Decision authority	.701*	.624*	.435*	.524*	1.000
Job Performance	.498*	.599*	.453*	.631*	.517*
Mean	3.15	3.26	3.27	3.34	3.50
SD	1.24	1.27	1.43	1.22	1.56

*Correlation is significant at p = .005

The correlation analysis highlighted the influence of the factors on the dependent variable, Occupational Stress. All factors exhibited a strong positive correlation with Occupational Stress, indicating that increases in workload, time pressure, work control, decision authority, and job performance are associated with higher levels of stress among respondents. Among these, decision authority showed the strongest correlation with the dependent variable ($r = .701, p = .000$), while time pressure demonstrated the weakest correlation ($r = .465, p = .000$). The ANOVA test confirmed that the regression model was a good fit for the data, $F(5, 294) = 37.287, p < .05$, signifying that the factors significantly predicted Occupational Stress. The relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was further explained through multiple regression analysis, with the results summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Coefficient between the Factors and the Dependent Variable

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.866	.217		4.474	.002
Workload	.184	.059	.221	1.824	.002
Time Pressure	.018	.074	.024	3.335	.003
Work Control	.198	.024	.258	2.547	.000
Decision authority	.265	.056	.415	3.569	.001
Job Performance	.058	.075	.059	2.658	.000

The analysis revealed that all factors significantly influenced occupational stress among employees, thereby supporting H1 ($\beta = .221, p = .002$), H2 ($\beta = .024, p = .003$), H3 ($\beta = .258, p = .000$), H4 ($\beta = .415, p = .001$), and H5 ($\beta = .059, p = .000$). Among the predictors, decision authority had the strongest effect on occupational stress (41.5%), followed by work control (25.8%), workload (22.1%), job performance (5.9%), and time pressure (2.4%)

The following hypothesis was developed, and an independent t-test was employed for its statistical verification.

H₁: Workload significantly contributes to the Occupational Stress among employees

H₂: Time Pressure significantly contributes to Occupational Stress among employees

H₃: Work Control significantly contributes to the Occupational Stress among employees

H₄: Decision Authority significantly contributes to the Occupational Stress among employees
 H₅: Job Performance significantly contributes to the Occupational Stress among employees

Table 7: Independent T Test

Factors		N	df	t	p
Workload	R ₁	32	98	.837	.405
	R ₂	68			
Time Pressure	R ₁	32	98	1.619	.109
	R ₂	68			
Work Control	R ₁	32	98	-1.666	.099
	R ₂	68			
Decision authority	R ₁	32	98	.664	.508
	R ₂	68			
Job Performance	R ₁	32	98	-2.018	.046
	R ₂	68			

It can be observed from the above table that, with $p > .05$, most of the variables—namely workload, time pressure, work control, and decision authority—did not show a significant impact on occupational stress, whereas job performance was found to have a significant effect among respondents.

8. FINDINGS :

The findings of the study indicate that all the identified factors—workload, time pressure, work control, decision authority, and job performance—significantly contribute to occupational stress among KSRTC employees. Among these, decision authority emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .415, p = .001$), followed by work control ($\beta = .258, p = .000$), workload ($\beta = .221, p = .002$), job performance ($\beta = .059, p = .000$), and time pressure ($\beta = .024, p = .003$). Correlation analysis further confirmed strong positive relationships between these factors and occupational stress, with decision authority showing the highest correlation ($r = .701$) and time pressure the lowest ($r = .465$). The independent t-test results revealed that, except for job performance ($p = .046$), variables such as workload, time pressure, work control, and decision authority did not show significant differences across demographic groups. This suggests that occupational stress is a widespread issue affecting employees regardless of their demographic characteristics. Overall, the study establishes that organizational factors—including limited decision-making power, heavy workload, inadequate job control, and reduced job performance—are major stressors that negatively influence the well-being and efficiency of KSRTC personnel.

9. SUGGESTIONS :

To address the high levels of occupational stress recognized among KSRTC employees, several measures are recommended. Ensuring timely payment of salaries and process security should be prioritized, as monetary instability is a main contributor to strain. Workload can be reduced via higher personnel allocation and recruitment of additional drivers, even as promoting participative decision-making and enhancing worker management over obligations will strengthen motivation and decrease stress. Introducing regular training, counseling, and employee assistance programs can further help staff cope with workplace pressures. Finally, fostering an obvious and supportive organizational culture, minimizing political interference, and ensuring efficient management are important to create a healthier work environment and improve overall organizational performance.

10. CONCLUSION :

Occupational stress is the negative reaction of employees when they have to suffer excessive pressures or other types of demands from the working environment. It is caused by poor work organization, such as poor work design or work systems, poor management, or dissatisfied working conditions. Public service sector employees are more exposed to such stress. Transport sectors, being a public sector, play

a pivotal role in the development of the country by providing valuable services to society; their employees are suffering high stress at work. In Kerala, KSRTC has been taking this service role very effectively for many decades. However, now the corporation is finding it difficult to operate its business efficiently due to several internal and external factors. It makes the management take some hard decisions, which is detrimental to the interests of the employees. This makes the employees more stressed at work.

In this study, five factors have been identified that determine the occupational stress among KSRTC employees. This study finds that these factors, which significantly influence the stress on employees, viz, workload, time pressure, work control, decision authority, and job performance, are to be taken into consideration when attempting to draft policies and programs by the corporation, unless they can hamper the growth of the corporation.

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