Impact Of Occupational Stress On The Emotional Well-Being Of Food Delivery Employees With Special Reference To Coimbatore City

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ABSTRACT:

The rapid rise of the gig economy has brought significant attention to the occupational experiences of food delivery employees. This study aims to examine the impact of occupational stress on the emotional well-being of food delivery employees, with special reference to Coimbatore City. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 160 respondents. The findings reveal that a majority of employees experience moderate to high levels of stress, with factors such as financial insecurity, poor work-life balance, and limited support systems contributing to emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and social isolation. These insights are crucial for policymakers and platform-based companies aiming to create a sustainable and supportive working environment for delivery personnel in urban areas like Coimbatore.

Keywords: Food delivery employees, Occupational stress, Emotional well-being, Coimbatore City, Work-life balance, Financial insecurity, Emotional exhaustion, Anxiety, Social isolation

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY:

The food delivery industry has experienced remarkable growth in recent years, driven by the increasing demand for convenience and the expansion of online food delivery platforms. However, the rapid rise of this gig-based sector has also brought significant challenges for delivery employees, who often work under high-pressure conditions with limited job security. Occupational stress stemming from time constraints, customer interactions, income variability, and adverse working conditions profoundly affects their emotional well-being. The food delivery industry has seen exponential growth in recent years, driven by the rapid advancement of technology, urbanization, and changing consumer preferences. The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the stressors faced by food delivery employees and their effects on emotional well-being. Occupational stress refers to the physical, emotional, and psychological strain experienced by individuals due to their work environment, demands, and expectations.

Occupational stress is defined as the psychological and physical strain caused by work-related factors. It arises when job demands exceed an individual's capacity to cope effectively. For food delivery employees, stressors include long working hours, tight deadlines, traffic congestion, weather conditions, job insecurity, and the pressure of meeting customer expectations. Additionally, the prevalence of algorithmic

management, where platforms use algorithms to assign tasks and monitor performance, often reduces the autonomy of workers and amplifies their stress levels. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by investigating the impact of occupational stress on the emotional well-being of food delivery employees in Coimbatore City.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the socio-economic factors of the food delivery employees.
- To analyze the level of occupational stress faced by food delivery employees.
- To examine the factors influencing the occupational stress of food delivery employees.
- To find out the impact of occupational stress on the emotional well-being of food delivery employees.
- To provide suggestions to improve the emotional well-being of food delivery employees.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- This study focuses on food delivery employees in Coimbatore, considering their demographic, socio-economic, and occupational backgrounds.
- It covers factors such as financial stability, work hours, customer feedback, and job security related to emotional well-being.
- The research investigates both direct and indirect stressors, including environmental factors like traffic and weather.
- It evaluates the availability and effectiveness of mental health support provided by employers.
- The findings aim to assist stakeholders, including employers, policymakers, and employees, in designing interventions to enhance job satisfaction and emotional resilience.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is confined to Coimbatore, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, such as the overestimation or underestimation of stress levels. The study focuses primarily on emotional well-being, leaving out physical health impacts that may also arise from occupational stress. The research does not account for seasonal or market-driven variations in workload and income, which may influence stress levels. Limited access to respondents due to the demanding nature of food delivery jobs might restrict the sample size.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

The rapid growth of the food delivery sector has created significant employment opportunities. These include extended working hours, unpredictable earnings, challenging customer interactions, and limited job security.

- Long and unpredictable working hours
- High-pressure environments due to time-bound deliveries
- Job insecurity and lack of employment benefits
- Exposure to road hazards and extreme weather conditions
- Customer interactions and service expectations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research methodology outlines the systematic approach adopted to study the impact of occupational stress on the emotional well-being of food delivery employees in Coimbatore City.

Research Design:

This study follows a descriptive research design to analyze occupational stress levels and their impact on the emotional well-being of food delivery employees. Descriptive research helps in understanding the existing conditions, behaviors, and attitudes of the target population.

Sampling Method:

- Sampling Technique: A non-probability convenience sampling technique is used, as respondents are selected based on availability and willingness to participate.
- Sample Size: Approximately 160 respondents, depending on the response rate and data saturation.
- Area of the Study: This study has been considered only in Coimbatore.

Data Collection Methods:
Primary data
A structured questionnaire will be used to collect responses from delivery employees. The questionnaire will consist of closed-ended questions to measure stress levels and emotional well-being.

Secondary Data
Collected from journals, articles, research papers, and government labour studies related to occupational stress and emotional well-being.

Tools for Analysis:
1. Percentage analysis
2. Chi-square test

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Venkataiah (2025) conducted a case study on zomato and swiggy delivery partners in Hyderabad, revealing that income instability, long working hours, and lack of job security are significant predictors of stress among food delivery workers. The study emphasizes the need for structural changes in the gig economy to address these fundamental issues.

Sohal and Sharma (2025) conducted a systematic literature review exploring workplace mental health among Indian employees. The review identified that unstructured work environments, prevalent in gig economies, contribute significantly to employee stress and highlighted the necessity for organizational interventions to improve mental health outcomes.

Lee and Chen's (2024) study highlights the critical issue of fatigue among food delivery riders, which can have severe consequences on their safety and well-being. The authors' findings emphasize the need for organizations to prioritize the health and safety of their riders. By addressing fatigue and implementing measures to reduce stress, organizations can create a safer and more sustainable work environment for food delivery riders.

Sharma and Gupta's (2024) study sheds light on the work stress and coping mechanisms among food delivery personnel in Mumbai. The authors' findings suggest that developing effective coping strategies is essential to mitigate the adverse effects of work stress on physical, mental, and emotional health. This study serves as a reminder for organizations to prioritize employee well-being and provide resources to support their mental health.

Research by Wanwaen et al. (2024) highlighted that food delivery riders experience moderate levels of stress, with a mean stress score of 40.56. The study suggests that both job-related and unrelated factors contribute to this stress, impacting overall well-being.

Smith et al. 's (2024) study examines the anxiety, mental health, and job insecurity among women gig workers. The authors' findings highlight the need for organizations to address job insecurity and workplace challenges to reduce the negative impact on workers' well-being. This study emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive work environment that acknowledges the unique challenges faced by gig workers.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY:

In today's fast-paced work environment, occupational stress has emerged as a significant concern, particularly in demanding service-oriented jobs such as food delivery. The rise of the gig economy, fueled by platforms like Zomato, Swiggy, and Uber Eats, has created employment opportunities but also introduced new challenges. Food delivery employees often face long working hours, unpredictable schedules, and customer pressure, all of which contribute to occupational stress. When left unmanaged, this stress can negatively impact their emotional well-being, leading to burnout, anxiety, and reduced job satisfaction. This study focuses on assessing the impact of occupational stress on the emotional well-being of food delivery employees in Coimbatore city.

Coimbatore, often referred to as the "Manchester of South India," is a rapidly growing city with a burgeoning middle class and a tech-savvy population. The city's economic vibrancy and cultural shift toward convenience-based services have fueled the demand for food delivery platforms. Major players such as Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats dominate the market, employing a significant number of delivery personnel. These employees play a critical role in ensuring the seamless operation of food delivery services, often navigating through challenging conditions to meet the high expectations of consumers.

Emotional well-being is a crucial aspect of overall mental health and is influenced by an individual's ability to manage stress effectively. Employees experiencing high levels of occupational stress often report feelings of frustration, demotivation, and even depression. Moreover, a lack of adequate support from management, unfair compensation, and safety concerns exacerbate their emotional strain. Understanding the relationship between occupational stress and emotional well-being in food delivery employees is essential to identifying strategies that can enhance their job satisfaction and mental health.

1. **Workload and pressure:** Excessive workload, tight deadlines, and high expectations.
2. **Lack of control:** Limited autonomy, micromanaging, and lack of decision-making power.
3. **Poor work environment:** Uncomfortable or hazardous working conditions, noise, and pollution.
4. **Unclear expectations:** Conflicting or unclear expectations, roles, and responsibilities.
5. **Poor relationships:** Conflict with colleagues, supervisors, or clients.
6. **Career development:** Limited opportunities for growth, promotion, or skill development.
7. **Work-life balance:** Conflicting demands between work and personal life.
8. **Physical health problems:** Headaches, fatigue, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.
9. **Mental health problems**: Anxiety, depression, burnout, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
10. **Reduced productivity:** Decreased motivation, performance, and job satisfaction.
11. **Absenteeism and turnover:** Increased absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE
Table 1 shows the demographic profiles of the respondents.

S.no	Demographic	Particulars	No of respondents	Percentage
1	Age	Below 20 Years	16	10
		21 Years-30 Years	90	56.3
		31 Years-40 Years	44	27.5
		Above 40 Years	10	6.3
2.	Gender	Male	145	90.6
		Female	15	9.4
3.	Marital Status	Single	71	44.4
		Married	82	51.2
		divorced/widowed	7	4.4
4.	Education	Below High	13	8.1%
		High school	54	33%
		Diploma	46	28.8%
		Graduate	32	20%

		Post Graduate	15	9.37%
5.	Monthly Income	Below Rs.10,000	13	8.1
		RS.10,000-RS.20,000	58	36.3
		RS.20,001-RS.30,000	76	47.5
		Above RS.30,000	13	8.1

Source of data: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The majority of respondents, 56.3%, are in the age group 21–30 years category, indicating that a young workforce dominates the food delivery sector. A significant majority, 90.6%, are male, highlighting a gender imbalance in this profession. Most respondents, 51.2%, are married, suggesting many have family responsibilities alongside their job. 33% have completed high school, reflecting a moderate education level among workers. 47.5% of the food delivery employees are earning between Rs 20,001 to Rs 30,000, indicating a modest income level that may affect their financial security.

CHI-SQUARE TEST:

Table 1 H_0: There is an association between the Age of the Respondents and the level of stress in dealing with customers and their feedback

Variable	Degree of freedom	Table value	Calculated value	Accepted/ Rejected
Age and how stressful do you find dealing with customers and their feedback?	9	16.919	19.13	Rejected

Level of significance 5%
Source of data: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The calculated value is 19.13 is greater than the table value of 16.919. (H_0 hypothesis) The null hypothesis is rejected. There is a relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The Chi-square test was conducted to examine the relationship between Age and the level of stress in dealing with customers and their feedback**.**

There is an association between the Age of the Respondents and the level of stress in dealing with customers and their feedback

Table 2 H_1: There is an association between the monthly income of the Respondents and the frequency of doing overtime work.

Variable	Degree of freedom	Table value	Calculated value	Accepted/ Rejected
Comparison between the Monthly Income of Food Delivery Employees and Food Delivery Employees.' How frequently do they work overtime	12	21.026	11.23	Accepted

Level of significance 5%
Source of data: Primary Data

Interpretation:

The calculated value (11.23) is less than the table value (21.026), the hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. There is an association between the monthly income of the Respondents and the frequency of doing overtime work. This may be due to the reason that overtime is a common job requirement in the delivery sector, irrespective of earnings. Regular overtime could still contribute to job-related stress, emotional

fatigue, and mental well-being, especially when not compensated fairly.

There is an association between the monthly income of the Respondents and the frequency of doing overtime work.

Table 3 H_1: There is an association between the Marital Status of the Respondents and level of satisfaction towards Fair compensation.

Variable	Degree of freedom	Table value	Calculated value	Accepted/ Rejected
Comparison between Marital Status and Satisfaction level of food delivery employees towards Fair compensation	8	15.507	15.018	Accepted

Level of significance 5%
Source of data: Primary Data

Interpretation:
Since the calculated value (15.018) is less than the table value (15.507), the null hypothesis is accepted. There is a significant relationship between marital status and satisfaction with fair compensation among food delivery employees. Whether married or unmarried, employees show similar levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the compensation they receive. This suggests that financial concerns related to job pay are shared across different marital statuses. Since many employees are dissatisfied with fair compensation, it could lead to increased pressure, especially for those with family responsibilities.

There is an association between the Marital Status of the Respondents and the level of satisfaction towards Fair compensation.

FINDINGS:
- The Majority of respondents 56.3%, belong to the age group between 21 years to 30 years.
- The majority of the food delivery employees are male 90.6%.
- The Majority, 51.2% of food delivery employees are marrie
- 33% of the respondents have educational qualification at high school level.
- 47.5% of the respondents have monthly earnings between Rs.20,001 to Rs.30,000 from their food delivery job.
- 44.4% of the respondents are choose this job as a reason of flexible working hours.
- 47.5% of the respondents opined that they sometimes felt stressed about work deadlines.
- 41.3% of the respondents sometimes do overtime delivery of food to the customers.
- The majority 77.5% of the Food Delivery employees are opined about that they are insecurity about their job.
- 45% of the respondents were moderately stressed about dealing with customers and feedback from them.
- 45% of the respondents were moderately stressed of dealing with customers and feedback from them.
- 38.1% of food delivery employees experienced high stress caused by unpredictable working conditions.
- 33.8% of the respondents opined about that they faced the anxious or worried Sometimes due to their work.
- The majority of the respondents 55.6% agreed that they are feeling burnout or exhaustion due to work.
- The majority of the respondents 55.6% expressed Neutral in mind set while completing the job (not a Positive Mind set or Negative Mind set).
- The majority 78.8% of the respondents agreed that they are socially isolated due to work schedule.
- 47.5% of the respondents opined negative impact on their self-esteem, due to their job.

- The majority of the respondents 54.37% feel that having proper support and guidance are helping improve their emotional well-being.
- 34.37% food delivery employees are dissatisfied on financial security.it has impacts their emotional well-being, that many feel financially insecure.
- 43.75% of food delivery employees feels dissatisfied showing that negative or harsh customer feedback is a major source of stress.
- 33% of the respondents are remains neutral which likely contributes to emotional stress and wellbeing.
- 43.75% of Food delivery employees feel a serious lack of support from management as a Strongly Dissatisfied.
- The Majority of food delivery employees 88.8% agreed that they access to mental health well-being from the management.
- 43.75% of food delivery employees opined strongly dissatisfied with their work hours, indicating a lack of flexibility and control over their schedules.
- 42.5% of Food delivery employees opined that they are dissatisfied in Fair compensation.
- 43.75% of food delivery employees are Strongly Dissatisfied that they are treated disrespectfully by customers.

Chi-square test:

a) There is an association between the Age of the Respondents and the level of stress in dealing with customers and their feedback
b) There is an association between the monthly income of the Respondents and the frequency of doing overtime work.
c) There is an association between the Marital Status of the Respondents and the level of satisfaction towards Fair compensation.

SUGGESTIONS:

a.   Food delivery platforms like Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats should introduce minimum income guarantees or incentives during low-order periods to reduce financial stress. Offer long-term contracts or part-time employment options to provide greater job security.

b.   Implement caps on daily working hours (e.g., 8–10 hours) and ensure mandatory breaks to prevent burnout and fatigue. Use predictive algorithms to balance order assignments, avoiding overburdening during peak hours.

c.   Platforms like Swiggy, Zomato, and Uber Eats should introduce minimum income guarantees or incentives during low-order periods to reduce financial stress. Offer long-term contracts or part-time employment options to provide greater job security.

d.   Establish regular communication channels (e.g., helplines, feedback sessions) between delivery employees and management to address grievances promptly. Train managers to recognize signs of stress and provide empathetic support.

e.   Provide training programs on handling difficult customers and managing feedback constructively to reduce stress from interactions. Introduce customer rating systems that account for external factors (e.g., traffic delays) beyond the employee's control.

CONCLUSION:

The study highlights that occupational stress significantly impacts the emotional well-being of food delivery employees in Coimbatore City. Key stressors include job insecurity, unpredictable working conditions, financial instability, customer interactions, and long working hours, leading to anxiety, burnout, social isolation, and reduced self-esteem among employees. While a majority have access to mental health

resources, the persistence of high stress levels suggests that current interventions are insufficient or underutilized. Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the occupational stress faced by food delivery employees in an urban Indian context and emphasizes the urgency of structural reforms in the gig economy.

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