

Effects of job stress on intention to quit among operational level female garment workers in Sri Lanka

A.L. Kotuwage

University of Sri Jaywardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka

Introduction

Apparel manufacturing is a highly labor intensive industry. Hence, dealing with labor is always challenging and difficult to predict by nature. At present many apparel manufacturers across the country are facing hardships in labor turnover, absenteeism, low job satisfaction and issues in recruitment and attracting talented employees.

This problem of labor turnover became crucial because it will lead to many other issues such as increase requirement cost, training cost, difficult to meet deadlines ect. According to the pioneers in the field, job stress is the one of the cause which vastly influences on this problem.

Stress is the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressure of the situation (Michie, 2002). Hence, Level of job and stress can affect both individuals and organization. A number of work related stressors have implications on the development of depression and other psychological disorders.

Marshal & Cooper (1979) elucidated outcomes of stress are poor physical health, poor mental health and organizational symptoms. Maheshwari in 1998 pointed out major consequences of stress which are psychological effects (sleep disturbance, sexual disturbance, depression, forgetfulness, irrational thought, anger and stress situation), behavioral effects (smoking, alcohol abuse) accident (violence, appetite disorder, quarrelsome nature) and physiological effects (heart disease, and smoking).

As of the late 2000s (decade), the Sri Lankan textile industry contributes 39% to the industrial production of the country and represents 43% of the country's total exports. Since the 1970s, the industry has grown to become the country's largest single source of export revenue.

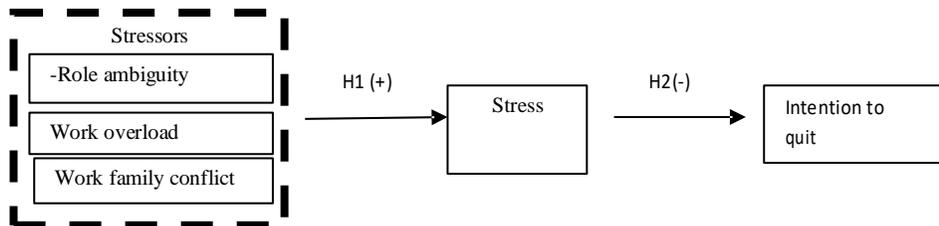
Most operational activities in garment factories are done by female workers. Therefore operational level females can make severe impact on the organization's performance and ultimately its survival. Executives at garment firms believe the industry is merely experiencing a bad image problem, but union officials say women are staying away because they get little respect and income from working long hours (Samath, 2011).According to S.Ahangamage from the women's centre –Sri Lanaka, female workers are leaving the garment sector and seek job as a domestics in the Middle East (Samath,2011). Hence, the current study attempts to find out the level of stress and intention to quit their jobs among operational level female workers in garment factories of Sri Lanka.

Methodology

Labor turnover and absenteeism are two major problems of the industry today. The garment sector has recorded average labor turnover rates of around 55% per annum; with the highest rate of 60% being recorded for factories in the Western province, and the average absenteeism of the industry is 7.4% per month, with the highest rate of 12% being recorded for factories in the Northern Province. The reasons for high turnover and absenteeism are poor working environment, worker stress, and poor social image of factory workers (Kelegama & Epaarachchi ,2003).

According to Freeman (1978) and Akerlof et. al. (1988) there is a strong relationship between unhappiness and turnover. A Number of previous studies in the psychological literature have found quitting intentions to be the strongest predictor of actual turnover. Within the economics literature, Mercer (1979) found that 79% of workers reporting an intention to quit had done so within the following year. Shields and Ward (2001) find that while 39% of nurses report intentions to quit in the next three years and 36% are found to have left NHS nursing three years later.

However, to identify the important factors that leads to operational level female workers in the garment factories leaving a job continue to remain a problem and challenge for both companies as well as researchers. Hence, the purpose of the study was to assess the level of job stress among operational level female workers, and examine intentions to quit their jobs. The study explored answers for two hypothesis bases on the following conceptual frame work.



H1- Stressors (Role ambiguity, work overload and work family conflicts) will positively influence job stress

H2- Job stress will negatively influence intention to quit among female operational level workers in garment factories.

The survey method is used in this study. A structured questionnaire has been used as a main method of collection data. A sample is drawn from five selected garments factories in the North Western province in Sri Lanka. The sample method is random sampling. Considering the objectives of the study, the sample is drawn on considering some similarities. All respondents are female in operational level job category. Sample will be consisted of 400 respondents among female operational level workers in the selected garments factories. Data collected from questionnaire are analyzed using the computer based statistical data analysis package (SPSS – 16.0).

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Research model analysis result on stressors.

Stressors	Mean value
Role ambiguity	3.97
Role conflict	2.06
Work overload	4.25
Work family conflict	4.01

According to the findings of Table 1, it’s evident that among the selected sample stressors are prevailing. It was found that there were 69% of employees have high level of stress and among them 80% of respondents have mentioned intention to quit from their jobs.

According to the previous correlation analysis where was conducted between job stress (overall) and the stressors, it was evident that role ambiguity (coefficient $r = 0.567$), work overload (coefficient $r = 0.540$), and work family conflict (coefficient $r = 0.672$) does influence job stress in a significant (at 0.01 level) positive manner. Further as per the pearson’s correlation analysis

between job stress and intention to quit (correlation $r = 0.68$), there is a strong positive correlation which is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed). Hence, both H1 and H2 are accepted.

Table 2. Research model analysis result on stress (effects).

Stress(effects)	Mean value
Behavioral effects	3.85
Psychological effects	3.68
Cognitive effects	3.70

Conclusions

This study has examined the impact of job stress on intention to quit job among female operational level workers in garment factories in Sri Lanka. Results show that the job stress is predicted by role ambiguity, work overload and work family conflict while the role conflict on job satisfaction is found to be quit insignificant. The results showed that job stress was found to be significant and vitally important predictor of intention to quit job. Thus, managerial level employees and policy makers in the relevant area should take necessary actions to reduce workers level of stress in order to minimize the rate of turnover.

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