# Exploring the Key Factors of Occupational Stress among Workers of Tea Enterprise

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**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the occupational stress among working women in Tea Enterprise, Champawat, Uttarakhand in order to explore the key factors of occupational stress among workers. Primary data collected with sample size of 120 which was collected at randomly. Pearson Correlation coefficient method is used for analysis the employees' level of occupational stress. The findings indicate that occupational stress in tea enterprises is structural and work-process oriented, rather than merely individual or psychological. Improving workplace ergonomics, reducing physical workload, providing safer tools, and implementing seasonal workload management strategies could significantly reduce stress levels.

**Key words:** Ergonomics, Occupational Stress, Tea Enterprises, Women, Workers, workplace

## Introduction

Occupational stress refers to the physical, emotional, and psychological strain experienced by individuals owing to their work environment, demands, and pressures. This can arise from various factors, including Workload and pressure (Excessive workload, tight deadlines, and high expectations), Lack of control (Limited autonomy, micromanaging, and lack of decision-making authority), Poor work-life balance(Conflicting demands between work and personal life), Unsatisfying work environment (Poor physical conditions, inadequate resources, and unsupportive colleagues or supervisors).

The tea industry is a significant sector in many countries, employing millions of workers, particularly women. Occupational stress is a pressing concern in the tea industry due to physical work demand viz.tea plucking, pruning, and processing involve manual labor, often in challenging weather conditions. Apart of these tea workers often receive low wages, inadequate benefits, and limited social security. They may face job insecurity, seasonal fluctuations, and lack of career advancement opportunities.

Sometimes they are exposed to health risks, such as pesticide exposure, musculoskeletal disorders, and heat stress.
Occupational stress can have severe consequences on tea workers' physical and mental health, including:

- **Anxiety and depression:** Chronic stress can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.
- **Physical health problems:** Stress can exacerbate existing health conditions, such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.
- **Decreased productivity:** Stress can reduce workers' motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction.

Addressing occupational stress among women in tea enterprises is crucial for several reasons: Women constitute a significant proportion of the workforce in the tea industry, particularly in tea plucking and processing. They are facing unique challenges, such as balancing work and family responsibilities, limited access to education and training, and exposure to health risks including anxiety, depression, and reproductive health issues. Reducing occupational stress can improve women's productivity, job satisfaction, and retention rates, ultimately benefiting the tea enterprise. It can contribute to their social and economic empowerment, promoting gender equality and sustainable development. Studying occupational stress among women in tea enterprises can inform policy and intervention development, ensuring that solutions are tailored to their specific needs and challenges.

By keeping above points in mind, the present work was planned to examine the occupational stress among women in tea enterprises. It is necessary to identify Key Stressors to determine the primary sources of occupational stress and develop targeted interventions or effective solutions to mitigate occupational stress, promoting women's health, well-being, and productivity.

**Literature of Review**

Stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occurs when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs the worker (Bell, Rajendran and Theiler 2012, 32; Bhui et al. 2016, 318) and he/she expressed that job stress can lead to poor health and even injury (Islam et al. 2012).Occupational stress has become a major concern within the plantation industry over the last two decades (Ranasinghe 2020). However, Di Fabio et al. (2018) identify occupational stress as an interactionist approach that shows a positive interaction between the individual stress level and outcomes. For instance, Brule and Morgan (2018) affirm that some individuals experience eustress (positive stress) from physical and psychological stressors, resulting in positive workplace outcomes. Thus, occupational stress can be a debilitating experience and a motivating factor that possesses an ability to pressure the employees. The feeling of being tired and having a lack of energy all the time is considered as the

most common symptom of stress. Other symptoms are insomnia, anxiety, tension headaches, backache, depressive features, indigestion and constipation, to mention but a few (Aldwin 1994).

Work-related stress has also been associated with a number of other ill-health outcomes, such as cardiovascular diseases (Kivimäki et al. 2002), musculoskeletal disorders, particularly back problems (Hoogendoorn et al. 2000) and neck-shoulder-arm-wrist-hand problems (Ariëns et al. 2001), as well as absence from work (Houtman et al. 1999). The people who work under stressful conditions such as work conflicts or lack of social support, autonomy and control experience they must face the physical and mental effects (Lluminari 2004) like heart and cardiovascular problems, anxiety, depression and demoralization, substance abuse, certain cancers, infectious diseases, conflicts injuries, and back pain etc. The detrimental consequences of occupational stress on workers, organizations, communities, and nations have been extensively documented in occupational health research. At an individual level, occupational stress has been commonly found to be associated with compromised physical health (Petek, 2018; Sidhu et al., 2020) and compromised mental/emotional health (Fortes et al., 2020; Kashif et al., 2017; Peasley et al., 2020), as well as fatigue/burnout (Chen, 2020; Park et al., 2020). At an organizational level, occupational stress has been commonly found to be associated with job dissatisfaction (Dartey-Baah et al., 2019; Park & Jang, 2017), low employee productivity, high rates of sickness absence (Gotz et al., 2018; Mortensen et al., 2017), as well as early exit from the labor force (Hintsa et al., 2015), among other things. Kim et al. (2019), in a study of 73,014 employees, found a relationship between gender and occupational stress and depressive symptoms. De Sio et al. (2017) found that female employees were at higher risk for work-related stress.

**Methodology:**

The present study was carried out among the worker's working in unorganized sectors at champawat, Uttarakhand, India. Unorganized sector for the present study comprised of Tea enterprises includes, tea nursery, tea garden and tea factory workers. The physical stress was assessed using modified version of occupational stress scale developed by Srivastava, A.K. (1976) along with self-made statements based on the identified sources of stress from the literature. Using interview schedule, 120 workers was selected randomly for the present study. In order to identify the underlying sub dimension of the construct, occupational stress, Pearson correlation coefficient analysis has been performed.

**Result:**

**Socioeconomic and Demographic Characteristics of Tea Workers:** Prior to the hypothesis testing, summary statistics were conducted for the variables of interest. Frequencies and percentages were conducted for the categorical variables (Age, family income, work education and experience).

**Table 1.1: Worker's demographic characteristics (N=120)**

| Characterstics | Tea nursery (n=40) | Tea Garden (n=75) | Tea Factory (n=05) | Total workers (n=120) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Age** | | | | |
| 18–27 years | 02 (5.0%) | 05 (6.67%) | 01 (20.0%) | 08 (6.67%) |
| 27–38 years | 12 (30.0%) | 18 (24.00%) | 01 (20.0%) | 31 (25.83%) |
| 38–47 years | 15 (37.5%) | 23 (30.67%) | 02 (40.0%) | 40 (33.33%) |
| More than 47 | 11 (27.5%) | 29 (38.67%) | 01 (20.0%) | 41 (34.17%) |
| | | | | |
| **Monthly Income** | | | | |
| 5000–10,000 | 20 (50.0%) | 32 (42.67%) | 05 (100%) | 57 (47.5%) |
| 10,000–15,000 | 20 (50.0%) | 26 (34.67%) | - | 46 (38.33%) |
| 15,000–20,000 | - | 12 (16.0%) | - | 12 (10.0%) |
| More than 20,000 | - | 05 (6.67%) | - | 05 (4.17%) |
| | | | | |
| **Educational Qualification** | | | | |
| Illiterate | 4 (10.0%) | 19 (25.33%) | 1(20.0%) | 24 (20.0%) |
| Literate but no formal education | 36 (90.0%) | 25 (33.33%) | 1(20.0%) | 62 (51.67%) |
| Class 1–5 | - | 14 (18.67%) | 2 (40.0%) | 16 (13.33%) |
| Class 6–9 | - | 8 (10.67%)) | 1(20.0%) | 09 (7.5%) |
| SSC/HSC | - | 5 (6.67%) | - | 05 (4.17%) |
| Under Graduate (UG) | - | 1 (1.33%) | - | 01 (0.83%) |
| | | | | |
| **Work experience** | | | | |
| 0-1 | 3 (7.5%) | 4 | - | 07 (5.83%) |
| 1-2 | - | 12 (16.0%) | - | 12 (10.0%) |
| 2-3 | 2 (5.0%) | 9 (12.0%) | 3 (60.0%) | 14 (11.67%) |
| 3-4 | 34 (85.0%) | 50 (66.67%) | 2 (40.0%) | 86 (71.67%) |
| >4 | 1 (0.83%) | - | - | 01 (0.83%) |

**Age Distribution:** The majority of workers fall above 47 years (34.17%), followed closely by those within the 38–47 years age group (33.33%), indicating an aging workforce. Younger workers (18–27 years) constitute only 6.67%, suggesting limited youth participation in the tea industry. Tea Factory workers show a relatively higher proportion of younger employees (20% in both 18–27 and 27–38 age groups), possibly due to the physical demands or technical nature of factory work. The dominance of older workers suggests that tea work is often a long-term occupational engagement rather than transitional or temporary employment. This is consistent with literature on plantation economies, where intergenerational continuity and limited labour mobility shape the workforce structure.

**Monthly Income:** Nearly half of the workers (47.5%) earn between ₹5,000–₹10,000, with Tea Factory workers exclusively falling in this bracket. A significant portion (38.33%) earn between ₹10,000–₹15,000, mostly from Tea Nursery and Tea Garden sectors. Only 4.17% earn more than ₹20,000, all from the Tea Garden, indicating limited upward mobility and wage disparity across sectors. It possibly reflects the informal or semi-formal nature of employment in these sectors. Nursery workers receiving higher income may indicate skill based differentiation or seasonal incentives.

**Educational Qualification:** A striking 51.67% of workers are literate but lack formal education, highlighting a gap in structured learning. Twenty percent are illiterate, with the Tea Garden having the highest proportion (25.33%). Only 4.17% have completed SSC/HSC, and 0.83% hold an undergraduate degree, reflecting low levels of higher education attainment. Tea Factory workers show relatively better formal education, with 60% having studied at least up to Class 1–9. The low educational attainment suggests structural barriers to human capital development within plantation labour communities. Such patterns are common in marginal rural economies, where early occupational entry, gender roles, and lack of schooling access inhibit educational progression. This demographic reality also has implications for training, awareness programmes, and skill development initiatives.

**Work Experience:** The majority (71.67%) have 3–4 years of experience, indicating a moderately experienced workforce. Very few workers (0.83%) have more than 4 years of experience, suggesting high turnover or limited long-term retention. Tea Nursery workers are the most experienced, with 85% having 3–4 years of service. Tea Factory workers show a concentration in the 2–3-year range (60%), possibly due to newer employment opportunities or sectoral growth. It may reflect labour turnover, seasonal hiring cycles or the relatively recent expansion of tea related activities in the region.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the tea workforce is predominantly middle-aged and semi-skilled, with limited formal education and modest income levels. Tea Garden workers form the largest group and show higher age and income diversity

whereas Tea Factory workers, though fewer, tend to be younger and slightly better educated.The data suggests a need for targeted interventions in education, skill development, and wage enhancement to improve worker welfare, productivity and labour stability.

**Occupational stress analysis**

Table1.2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients among the major dimensions of occupational stress experienced by workers engaged in tea enterprises. The variables include Physical Exertion, Lack of Time for Family, Injuries & Tool Discomfort, Seasonal Discomfort, Environmental/Tool Effects, and the overall occupational stress. The analysis provides insights into the interconnected nature of physical, environmental, and psychosocial stressors within the work environment.

**Table 1.2: Occupational Stress Subcategories: Correlations Analysis (N=120)**

| Subcategories of Occupational Stress | | Physical Exertion | Lack of Time for Family | Injuries & Tool Discomfort | Seasonal Discomfort | Environmental/ Tool Effects | Overall occupational stress |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physical Exertion | Pearson Correlation | 1 | -.104 | .594** | .081 | .167 | .816** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .258 | .000 | .377 | .068 | .000 |
| Lack of Time for Family | Pearson Correlation | -.104 | 1 | .086 | .228* | -.057 | .259** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .258 | | .351 | .012 | .536 | .004 |
| Injuries & Tool Discomfort | Pearson Correlation | .594** | .086 | 1 | .082 | .495** | .813** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .351 | | .375 | .000 | .000 |
| Seasonal Discomfort | Pearson Correlation | .081 | .228* | .082 | 1 | -.005 | .398** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .377 | .012 | .375 | | .961 | .000 |
| Environmental/Tool Effects | Pearson Correlation | .167 | -.057 | .495** | -.005 | 1 | .433** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .068 | .536 | .000 | .961 | | .000 |
| Overall Occupational Stress | Pearson Correlation | .816** | .259** | .813** | .398** | .433** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .004 | .000 | .000 | .000 | |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | | |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | | |

The results clearly show that all the selected occupational factors are positively and significantly correlated with the overall stress score. Since all p-values are less than 0.01, the relationships are statistically significant at the 1% level, implying high reliability of the findings. Thus, increases or decreases in any of the independent variables (workload, family time constraints, injuries, seasonal discomfort, and environmental/tool factors) directly correspond to increases or decreases in the overall occupational stress experienced by workers. The findings mirror earlier research where physically demanding tasks and unsafe tools contributed significantly to work stress. Studies such as Puteh et al. (2021), and Munisamy (2013)

similarly observed that occupational hardships tend to amplify stress levels. However, unlike certain contexts—such as plantation studies where stress may sometimes enhance performance—our results primarily emphasize the accumulation of discomfort rather than performance outcomes. Consistent with Pahari (2024) and Sathya (2021) the results confirm that experiences of stress that negatively impact their overall well-being and quality of life whereas working condition, heavy workload and lack of sufficient time are crucial determinants of workers' well-being in primary-sector occupations like tea plantations. Overall, the correlation analysis establishes a clear and significant positive relationship between all occupational stressors and the total occupational stress score.

This demonstrates that higher levels of physical, environmental, ergonomic, and personal-life–related challenges collectively heighten the stress burden on tea enterprise workers. The findings indicate that occupational stress in tea enterprises is structural and work-process oriented, rather than merely individual or psychological. Improving workplace ergonomics, reducing physical workload, providing safer tools, and implementing seasonal workload management strategies could significantly reduce stress levels. These insights offer strong evidence for designing targeted interventions and policy measures aimed at improving the health, safety, and well-being of plantation and processing workers.

**Key factors responsible for occupational stress**

Occupational stress in the tea enterprise, particularly in tea plantations and factories, arises from various factors. The following graph (1) was highlighted the prevalence of stress subcategory according to the participants scored and shows how common (prevalent) each stressor is. **Physical Exertion** (Very High Prevalence – ~9) was the most prevalent stressor among tea workers. Tea cultivation and plucking involve continuous bending, carrying loads, and long hours of manual work. The high score indicates that almost all tea workers experience stress associated with heavy physical labor. Kubik & Moore (2001) was observed sleep disturbance, lack of energy, headaches, gastrointestinal problems, respiratory problems and elevated blood pressure among the farm women which caused the physical stress. **Prone to Injuries** (High Prevalence – ~7)from repetitive motions, sharp tools, slippery terrain, and encounters with wildlife/insects are common. This high value shows that a significant proportion of tea workers face stress due to the frequent risk of injury. **Lack of Time for Family** (Moderate to High Prevalence – ~6) Tea plantation work typically requires long hours and sometimes demanding schedules that reduce personal or family time. The moderate-high value suggests that many workers frequently feel stressed due to work–life imbalance. **Uncomfortable Due to Seasonal Change** (Moderate Prevalence – ~5): Climate parameters like heat, rain, cold, and humidity increase stress on tea workers by reducing productivity and harming health, especially in outdoor and manual activities. The moderate score indicates that while this is a common stressor, it is not as severe as

physical exertion or injury risk. **Effect of Working Environment and Tools** (Lower Prevalence – ~4):Stress caused by inadequate tools or challenging work settings is less prevalent compared to the other factors. This suggests that although the work environment affects some workers, it is not the dominant stressor.

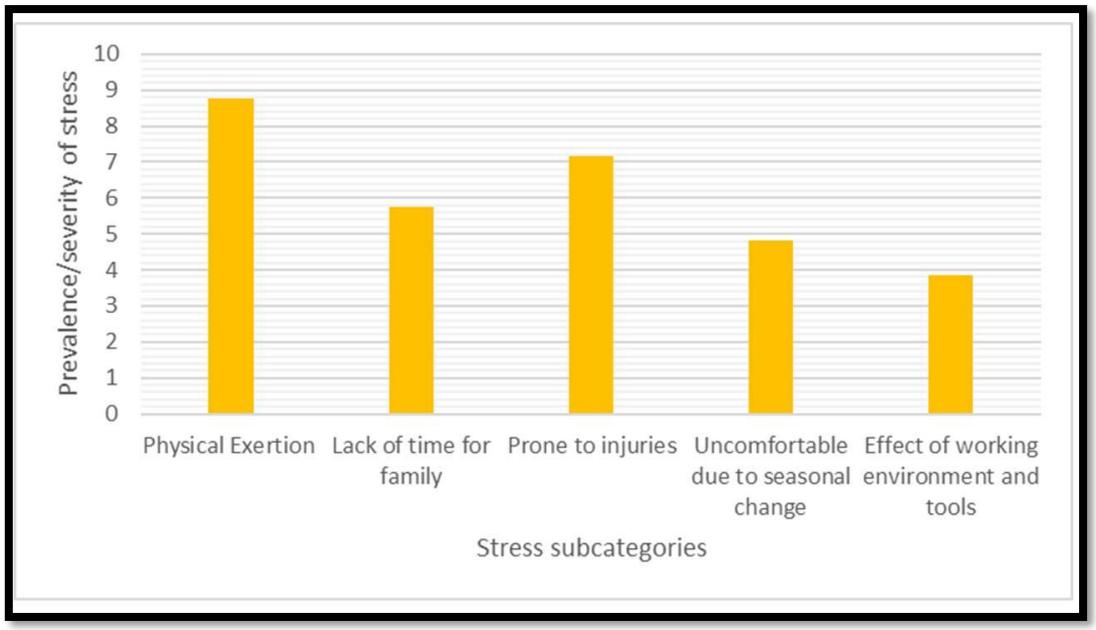


**Fig. 1: Visual representation of stress subcategories by prevalence/severity**

The graph indicated that tea plantation workers experience high levels of occupational stress, primarily due to Intense physical exertion, High risk of injuries and Insufficient time for family. Environmental discomfort and tools-related issues also contribute but were less widespread. Hence, the prevalence of occupational stress among tea workers is high, with physical and safety-related factors being the most dominant stressors.

**Ho: There is no relationship between work stress and income, level of education and work experience.**

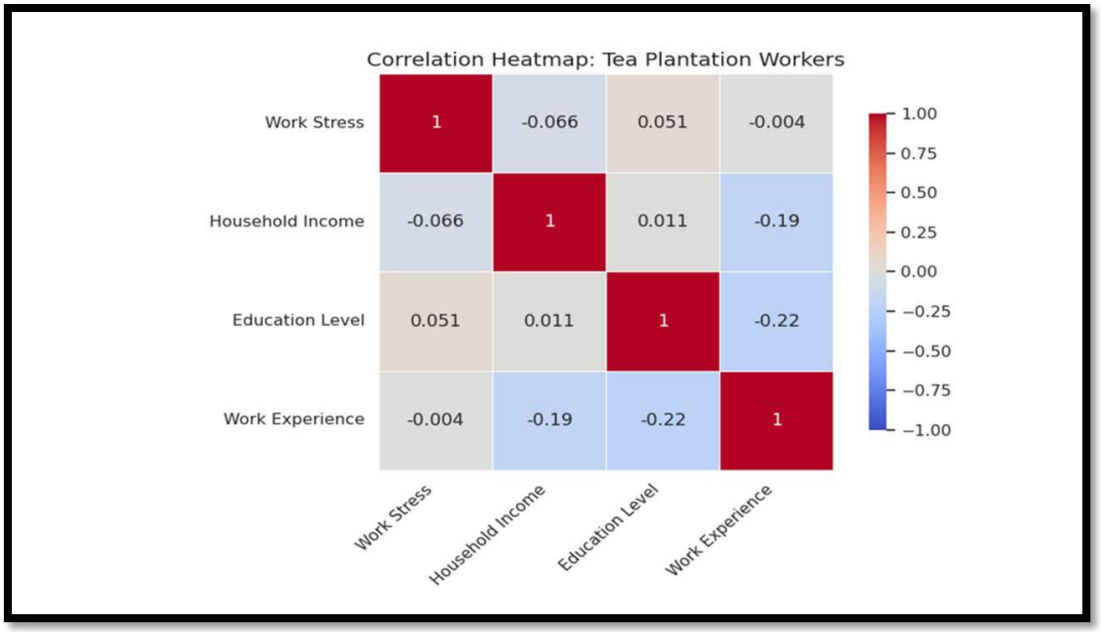


**Fig. 2: Correlation Heatmap for Tea enterprise workers**

The above heat map (Fig.2) presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between work stress and three key socioeconomic variables: household income per month, level of education, and work experience. It was found from the table that work stress and household income are negatively correlated (-0.066). It suggests that higher income may slightly reduce stress levels, though the relationship is not statistically significant. Further, a positive correlation (0.051) was found between work stress and level of education. It indicates that higher education may be associated with slightly increased stress. The correlation is nearly zero (-0.004), implying no significant relationship between experience and stress levels. A statistically significant negative correlation (-0.190*) suggests that more experienced workers tend to have lower household income, potentially reflecting wage stagnation or limited upward mobility. A significant negative correlation (-0.222*) indicates that workers with higher education levels tend to have less experience, possibly due to newer entrants into the workforce being more educated. These findings highlight the complex and often weak relationships between work stress and socioeconomic factors among tea plantation workers. While income and education show limited influence on stress levels, the inverse relationship between experience and income warrants further investigation into wage structures and career progression in the sector.

**Conclusion:** So, it can be concluded that the prevalence of occupational stress among tea workers is high, with physical and safety-related factors being the most dominant stressors. Overall, the correlation analysis establishes a clear and significant positive relationship between all occupational stressors and the total occupational stress score. This demonstrates that higher levels of physical, environmental, ergonomic, and personal-life–related challenges collectively heighten the stress burden on tea enterprise workers. To address these issues and improve worker well-being:

- **Implement wage reviews** to ensure experienced workers are compensated fairly.
- **Provide stress management training** and mental health support, especially for newer, more educated workers.
- **Develop career progression pathways** that reward both experience and education.
- **Conduct further research** to explore other potential stressors such as working conditions, climate factors, and job security.

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