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## **The Impact of Job Stress on Turnover Intention: A Study of Reputed Apparel Firm in Sri Lanka**

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### **Abstract**

This study attempts to identify the impact of job stress on turnover intention among machine operators in reputed apparel firm in Sri Lanka. Due to high level of turnover among machine operators, Presently Sri Lankan apparel industry faces a greater difficulties and it is noted that little attempt has been taken by the researchers to integrate the job stress with turnover intention in Sri Lankan literature. Hence problem of this study is to investigate ‘How the job stress causes an impact on turnover intention among machine operators in reputed apparel firm in Sri Lanka’. This study is conducted under the mixed research method and data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire consisting of 23 questions with five point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. In addition to that, data were collected through structured interviews with ten resigned employees. Under the universal sampling method, data were collected from 90 machine operators currently employed in the selected apparel firms. Data thus collected were analyzed using SPSS computer package having the univariate and bivariate analyses. Findings of the research revealed that there is a positive impact of job stress on turnover intention among machine operators in reputed apparel firms in Sri Lanka. It was concluded that there is a positive impact of job stress on turnover intention which means that majority of machine operators have a high degree of job stress. Further, this study also supported the view that the managers of apparel firms should get strategic steps to reduce job stress and turnover intention among the employees.

**Keywords:** Apparel Firm, Job Stress, Machine Operators, Turnover Intention

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### **Introduction**

There is a continuous growth of competition, restructuring, layoffs, downsizing, technology changes and mergers in an organization and this leads to the increase the level of stress among employees. Therefore, job stress has been a widely discussed- issue in today’s contexts (Fernando et al. 2010). Stressors negatively affect physical health as well as psychological wellbeing of the human beings (Watson & Pennebaker cited in Liyanage et al. 2014). Job stress occurs when there is an imbalance between job requirements and a worker’s ability to cope. Whitt and Wilson (cited in Liyanage et al. 2008) have defined the job stress as “a feeling or a condition a person experienced when that person perceives that demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize”.

Stress exists in every organization either big or small and stress may express itself differently and affect workers differently, in different work environment. Though, stress release many positive outcomes as well negative outcomes such as lower performance, lower job satisfaction, lower organizational commitment and turnover intention, it does not always affect badly for human beings (Opatha 2010).

Among these costs of stress, major negative outcome is employee turnover intention (Sullivan & Bhagat cited in Liyanage et al. 2014). Turnover intention means that intention of employees to quit the organization (Tett & Meyer 1993). Further, it is defined as an attitudinal (thinking of quitting), decisional (intention to leave), and behavioral (seeking for a new job) process (Sager cited in Khan et al. 2014).

There are many researchers (Noor & Maad 2008; Sherazet al. 2014; Mxenge et al. 2014) who have identified that there is a significant impact of job stress on turnover intentions. Many researchers (Muhammad et al. cited in Khan et al. 2014; Kaur et al. 2013) suggest that if organizations are willing to retain their employees, they must reduce job stressors which may cause the job stress ultimately leading to employee turnover intentions.

However, Sri Lankan apparel industry is the major foreign exchange earner in Sri Lankan economy (Perera cited in Liyanage et al. 2014). Apparel industry attracts mainly young generation especially young females (Joshi cited in Liyanage et al. 2014). Apparel industry creates many employment opportunities especially for non-managerial and non-technical jobs. Despite these entire favorable facts associated with the apparel industry, at present it faces a high level of turnover. (Khatri et al. cited in Liyanage et al. 2014). Hence, the apparel industry faces major challenge for reducing turnover among their employees. Turnover intention is the single best predictor of turnover. Hence, this study tries to find out whether job stress has a significant impact on turnover intention among machine operators in reputed apparel firms in Sri Lankan apparel industry.

### **Problem Background and Problem of the Study**

The literature regarding turnover intention suggests that, pertaining to work related factors, particularly conditions of employment (e.g. salary, career opportunities) are important causes of turnover intention (Houkes et al. cited in Liyanage et al. 2014). Turnover intentions were clearly and mainly determined by the unmet career expectations like higher salary and more responsibility, and to a lesser scope by quality of job content (Houkes et al. cited in Liyanage et al. 2014). Above discussed facts such as salary, less career opportunity and high responsibility are major determinants of job stress which leads to turnover intentions.

Turnover intention and turnover has become a prominent problem in apparel industry in Sri Lanka. But very limited amount of studies address this problem in Sri Lanka. In Sri Lankan literature, similar studies are found in banking, medical and academic fields (Velampy & Aravinthan 2013; Abeysekara 2007). There is a lack of research on the impact of job stress on turnover intention in apparel industry in Sri Lanka. Hence this study focused to identify the impact of job stress on turnover intention among machine operators in reputed apparel

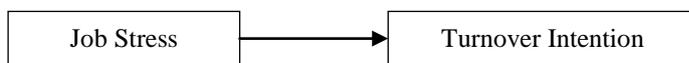
firms in Sri Lanka. Hence the research problem of this study is “is how job stress impacts on turnover intention among machine operators in reputed apparel firm in Sri Lanka’.

### **Research Framework**

The research framework for this study is depicted in Figure 1. As it suggests, the two variables of this study are the independent variable: job stress and the dependent variable: turnover intention.

Job stress consists of five dimensions (the work overload, the role conflict, the role ambiguity, the job demands and the social support) as well as turnover intention consists of three dimensions namely the Cognitive, Behavior and Pay

Figure 1: Research Framework



### **Method**

#### ***Study Design***

Objective of this study is to identify the impact of independent variable (job stress) on dependent variable (turnover intention). Hence, the type of the study was co- relational. This is a natural study because it tries to understand impact of job stress on turnover intention in natural working environment of reputed apparel firms in Sri Lanka. No any unspontaneous or contrived setting is created for the study. The data for the study were collected within two weeks. Hence, this study is cross sectional in nature. The unit of the study is individual.

The population consists of all the machine operators in the selected reputed apparel firms. There are 90 machine operators currently employed in the selected apparel firms. This study considers all the existing machine operators for the data collection purpose under universal sampling method and is based on primary data.

#### ***Measures***

The questionnaire is the main tool used for the data collection purpose. The questionnaire method is found as the most suitable way for the collecting data collection from respondents. In addition to that, structured interviews were conducted with ten resigned machine operators only to get the findings of the questionnaire justified. The questionnaire is designed so that it could measure the job stress, turnover intention and demographic variables such as age, gender, marital status, educational qualification, experience and residency which are measured using close ended questions.

Questions for measuring job stress are taken from some other well accepted researchers and it measured five dimensions of job stress. They are Beehr et al. (1976), Rizzo et al. (1970) and Cousins et al. (2004). It contained 11 statements to measure the job stress of machine operators. The questionnaire for measure turnover intention was a standard questionnaire originally developed by Bluedorn (1982) and used to measure three dimensions of turnover

intention. It contained 4 statements to measure the turnover intention of machine operators. In addition to that, another two questions developed by Smith et al. (1992) were added to it.

### ***Validity and Reliability***

A pilot test was carried out using the responses of the 25 machine operators from reputed apparel firms. As shown in Table 1, the results of the Cronbach's Alpha test are reasonable enough to ensure the reliability of this study. The results of Cronbach's Alpha test suggest that the internal reliability of each instrument (Kottawatta 2014).

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha
Job Stress	0.728
Turnover Intention	0.761

The content validity of the instrument was ensured by the conceptualization of the variables on literature (Kottawatta 2014) and the content validity of the variables of the study was ensured by the fact that the correlation support the hypotheses formulated linking the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable (Kottawatta 2014).

### ***Techniques of Data Analysis***

Responses of the participants were analyzed and evaluated using descriptive statistics and correlation. The variables evaluated by the univariate and bivariate analysis methods using statistical package for the social science (SPSS).

### **Results**

To identify determinants of job stress and turnover intention of machine operators of reputed apparel firm in Sri Lanka, the mean value and the standard deviation of each dimension was used. According to the mean value, each dimension is ranked. Determinants of job stress are given in Table 2 and the determinants of turnover intention are given in Table 3.

Table 2: Determinants of Job Stress

Job Stress	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Work overload	3.2611	0.82185	5
Role conflict	3.6944	0.66491	2
Role ambiguity	3.9167	0.67976	1
Job demands	2.6833	0.79482	3
Social support	3.3667	0.85977	4

Table 3: Determinants of Turnover Intention

Turnover Intention	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
cognitive	3.4222	0.97701	2
Behavior	3.4000	1.03370	3
Pay	3.4889	0.90249	1

To investigate the degree of job stress among machine operators of reputed apparel firms, the mean value and the standard deviation was used and they were 3.3844 and 0.41173 respectively (refer Table 4).

Table 4: Degree of Job Stress

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Job stress	90	3.3844	0.41173

As well as the upper and the lower bounds of the mean fall between 3 and 4 indicating that the majority of machine operators have a high degree of job stress.

According to the results of Pearson’s Correlation shown in Table 5, there is a positive impact of job stress on turnover intention.

Table 5: Correlation between Job Stress and Turnover Intention

		JS	TI
JS	Pearson Correlation	.274	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	
	N	90	90
TI	Pearson Correlation	1	.274
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009
	N	90	90

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table no 6, the regression equation of job stress of machine operators is:

$$\text{Turnover intention} = 1.792 + 0.274 (\text{job stress})$$

The b value of the equation, the gradient of the regression, is 0.274, which is significant at 1% (significant = 0.009). As indicated by R Squared, 37.5% of the variance of turnover intention is explained by job stress with the standardized beta of 0.075.

Table 6: Results of Regression Analysis

Variable	Job Stress
Method	Linear
R Square	.375
Adjusted R Square	.364
F	7.136
Significance	.009
B-Constant	1.792
b-Value	.274

### Discussion and Conclusion

According to the results of data analysis, it was identified that the major determinants of job stress are the role ambiguity, the role conflict and the respective job demands. The social support and the work overload have lesser impact on job stress. Pay becomes the major determinants of turnover intention. Majority of the machine operators had a high degree of job stress. But parallel to the findings of Fernando (2010), the study found that there is a high degree of job stress among machine operators in reputed apparel firm in Sri Lanka.

This study empirically found that there is a positive significance between the job stress and the turnover intention of machine operators in reputed apparel firms in Sri Lanka. In support with the findings of the several previous studies, (Liyanage et al. 2014; Qureshi et al. 2013; Mosadeghrad 2013), the study found that there is a positive relationship between the job stress and the turnover intention of machine operators. It was also observed that when the job stress increases, the turnover intention also naturally increases.

In the light of the findings of this study, the management of an apparel firm has the ability to understand that most of the machine operators are under job stress. Hence, it is required to manage the moderate level of job stress among workers. There are several recommendations for the managers to keep moderate level of job stress. It would be suggested that necessary steps are to be taken to appoint more male workers because of male workers manage the stress than female workers and proper redesign job of machine operators including to task variety, task significance, task identity, autonomy and feedback will help to reduce their stress level. According to the findings, pay becomes the major determinants of turnover intention of machine operators. Hence, it is essential to give pay ensuring all the types of equity (absolute, external and internal equity), which will reduce turnover intention.

It is recommended to carry out similar research studies for other industries as well exploring the impact of other dimensions of job stress and turnover intentions on employees that have not been measured in the current study.

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