CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an attempt was made to recapitulate the key findings of the present study and based on these findings few suggestions have been offered. The objectives of the study were accomplished in two stages. First, the profiles of employees, stress experience, impact of stress and coping strategies were studied. It is followed by the study on social support factors and expectations of the employees were carried out.

8.2 Findings

The major findings of the study are summarized below:

Objective: 1

To study the socio-economic profile of the employees, symptoms and factors influencing the work-related stress.

8.2.1 Profile of Respondents

More than four-fifth of the respondents are Cane Inspectors. 34.8 per cent of the respondents belong to the age group of 36 to 45 years. 31.8 per cent of the respondents hold Bachelor’s degree. 26.1 per cent of the respondents have more than 20 years experience. 79.1 per cent of the respondents earn a monthly income of Rs. 5,001 to Rs. 15,000. 88.8 per cent of the respondents are married. More than six-tenth of the respondents are from nuclear family. 60.9 per cent of the respondents have less than 4 dependents in their family.

8.2.2 Stress Symptoms

40 per cent of the respondents have experienced moderate level of stress symptoms. The higher stress symptoms are found among the Diploma holders with mean score of 24.31. The higher stress symptoms are found among Cane Officers with mean score of 23.94 and the higher stress symptoms are found among unmarried respondents with mean scores of 27.27 respectively.
The higher stress symptoms are found among the respondents from 26 to 35 years age group with mean score of 24.63. The higher stress symptoms are found among the respondents who have less than 5 years experience with mean score of 25.22. The higher stress symptoms are found among the respondents who come under below Rs. 5,000 income group with mean score of 28.89. The higher stress symptoms are found among the respondents who have more than 5 dependents in their family with mean score of 25.67. The higher stress symptoms are found among the respondents in co-operative mill with mean scores of 24.31.

The profile variables which are significantly associated with stress symptoms are age, experience, income and numbers of dependents since their ‘F’ values are 3.353, 4.340, 9.091 and 3.605 respectively. The profile variables which are significantly associated with stress symptoms are marital status and type of mill since their ‘t’ test values are 5.365 and 2.091 respectively.

The twelve important stress symptoms identified in the study are moody, irritability, short-temper, accelerated speech, nail-biting, restlessness, lack of confidence, getting confused easily, gain/loss of weight, feeling negative about everything, worrying and nervousness. The most important stress symptoms for the respondents identified by average score analysis are worrying, irritability and short-temper.

Worrying is the first important stress symptom for Cane Officers whereas short temperedness is for Cane Inspectors and the mean scores are 2.45 and 2.47 respectively. The second important stress symptom ranked by Cane Officers is irritability with mean score of 2.42 whereas for Cane Inspectors worrying with mean score of 2.40. For Cane Officers, short-temper is the third important stress symptom and the mean score is 2.35 whereas for Cane Inspectors it is irritability with mean score of 2.30.

8.2.3 Stress Factors

The fifteen factors influencing stress as identified in the study were work load, poor salary, time pressures and deadlines, frequent travel, repetitive and boring work, poor and unplanned work, shortage of cane harvesting laborers,
unexpected accidents of sugarcane-loaded lorries, lack of career development, feeling of powerlessness, lack of job security and unable to satisfy all stakeholders. The application of Garrett ranking method identified shortage of cane harvesting laborers, work load, time pressures and deadlines, and unable to satisfy all stakeholders as the topmost stress causing factors for the respondents.

The difficult factors in the job of the respondents were group behavior, lack of information, office politics and conflicts, excessive interruptions and lack of recognition. The dominant difficult factor among the respondents to experience high level of stress symptoms as identified by two way table is lack of information which constitutes 35.2 per cent.

Significant relationship is found between difficult factors in job and stress symptoms since the Chi-Square value is 19.830.

The workload factors for the respondents were shortage of required resources, insufficient co-workers, more administration and paper work, continuous and chaotic job demands and shortage of help at work. 35.8 per cent of the respondents reported insufficient co-workers as the dominant work load factor that causes high level of stress symptoms.

27.6 per cent of the respondents who slowly took efforts to deal with overtime work have experienced high level of stress symptoms.

Significant relationship is found between overtime work and level of stress symptoms since the Chi-Square value is 16.513.

Objective: 2

To analyze the impact of occupational stress on health, behavior and performance of employees in the sugar mills.

8.2.4 Impact of Stress on Health

87.3 per cent of the respondents have impact of stress on their health. Fifteen major physical and mental health problems identified in the study were headache, high blood pressure, stomach disorder and ulcer, chest pain, back pain, skin irritation and allergies, cancer, diabetes, asthma, fatigue, sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression, tendency to remain alone and poor concentration.
The most important physical and mental health problems for the respondents, as identified by average score analysis are headache, back pain and poor concentration. Headache is the dominant health problems for Cane Officers whereas poor concentration is the dominant mental health problem for Cane Inspectors since their respective mean scores are 2.51 and 2.53.

The simple regression analysis shows that there is positive correlation between stress symptoms and physical and mental health problems. The regression co-efficient found for stress symptom score is 0.814. This indicates that stress symptoms score affects physical and mental health problems score positively. The t-test result shows that the regression co-efficient is significant at 1 per cent level.

8.2.5 Behavioral changes

Fifteen behavioral changes identified in the study were frequent hospitalization, increased smoking, excessive alcohol, drug addiction, general proneness to accidents, under/over eating, frequent crying, withdrawal from relationships, consumption of supari/tobacco items, gambling, suicidal thoughts, violence, shouting at family members, seeking help from others and poor performance in job.

The dominant behavioral change among the respondents is shouting at family members that constitutes to 62.8 per cent. It is followed by seeking help from others that constitutes 58 per cent.

8.2.6 Effect of Stress on Job Performance

The effect of stress on job performance identified in the study were absenteeism, decreased productivity, wasted potential and skills, loss of goodwill, reduced work effectiveness, low morale, premature retirement plan and reduced job satisfaction. Among the respondents, 54.5 per cent reported that they have reduced job satisfaction due to job stress. It is followed by reduced work effectiveness that constitutes 50.3 per cent.

The multiple regression analysis shows that both stress symptoms score and physical and mental health problems score affect job performance score significantly at 1 per cent level. This means that stress symptoms and health problems have influence over job performance.
Objective: 3

To ascertain the stress management facilities offered by the sugar mills and employees’ coping strategies for managing stress.

8.2.7 Stress Management Facilities and Coping Strategies

68.5 per cent of the respondents have not utilized stress management facilities offered by the workplace. Among the respondents who utilized stress management facilities, 69.2 per cent of the respondents have enjoyed vacation and holiday trips provided by the organization. While 51.9 per cent have utilized employee health awareness programmes and recreation centre.

Twelve important coping strategies identified in the study were yoga/meditation, physical exercise, entertainment, away from stressful environments, sleep, speaking with likeminded persons, playing with pet animals, prayer, medications, positive thinking, time management and tour. The most important coping strategies for the respondents identified by average score analysis are positive thinking, prayer and speaking with likeminded persons.

Positive thinking is the most important coping strategy for both Cane Officers and Cane Inspectors with mean scores of 3.87 and 3.14 respectively. The second important coping strategy ranked by both Cane Officers and Cane Inspectors is prayer with mean scores of 3.83 and 3.25 respectively. Speaking with likeminded persons is the third important coping strategy ranked by them with mean scores of 3.38 and 3.22 respectively.

63.6 per cent of the respondents overcome stress to some extent by practicing some coping strategies and stress management facilities provided by their workplace while 22.4 per cent of the respondents overcome stress to a great extent.

29.9 per cent of the ITI holders and 41.5 per cent of the respondents in 26 to 35 years age group overcome stress to a great extent. 74.2 per cent of the Cane Officers overcome stress to some extent while 25.7 per cent of the Cane Inspectors overcome stress to a great extent.
The profile variables which are significantly associated with the level of stress overcome by the respondents are educational qualification, age, experience, monthly income and number of dependents since their Chi-Square values are 25.380, 43.728, 31.836, 29.504 and 21.095 respectively.

**Objective: 4**

To identify the social support factors to reduce stress and expectation of employees in this regard.

**8.2.8 Social Support Factors**

The rescaled factor loadings displayed four important social support factors. They are Society support, Relation support, Workplace support and Surrounding support.

The ‘Society support’ factor consists of five variables and the important social support variable in ‘Society support’ factor is ‘community centres’ since its factor loading is 0.864.

The ‘Relation support’ factor consists of two variables and the important social support variable in ‘Relation support’ factor is ‘neighbors’ since its factor loading is 0.864.

The ‘Workplace support’ factor consists of two variables and the important social support variable in ‘Workplace support’ factor is ‘subordinates’ since its factor loading is 0.904.

The ‘Surrounding support’ factor consists of three variables and the important social support variable in ‘Surrounding support’ factor is ‘friends’ since its factor loading is 0.811.

The profile variables which are significantly associated with ‘Society support’ factor are educational qualification, age, experience and monthly income since their ‘F’ values are 3.754, 9.032, 6.505 and 4.177 respectively.

The profile variables which are significantly associated with ‘Relation support’ factor are age, experience and monthly income since their respective ‘F’ values are 6.827, 3.266 and 2.801.
The profile variables which are significantly associated with ‘Workplace support’ factor are educational qualification, age, experience and monthly income since their ‘F’ values are 9.758, 10.142, 6.946 and 8.580 respectively.

The profile variables which are significantly associated with ‘Surrounding support’ factor are age, experience and monthly income since their respective ‘F’ values are 7.215, 8.744 and 9.838.

The profile variable which is significantly associated with ‘Relation support’ factor, ‘Workplace support’ factor, and ‘Surrounding support’ factor is marital status since their t-test values are 3.405, 5.175 and 2.803 respectively.

30 per cent of the respondents got support during difficult situation while 26.3 per cent got support ‘during all new tasks’.

8.2.9 Expectations of the Respondents

The various expectations from the respondents in the study were counseling programmes, training and development activities, proper recognition, exclusive staff for procuring labor for cane harvesting, opportunities for career development, effective performance management system, open communication and sufficient support. 85.5 per cent of the respondents expected exclusive staff for procuring labor for cane harvesting followed by sufficient support that constitutes 82.7 per cent.

8.3 Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study the following suggestions were drawn.

8.3.1 Exclusive Staff for Procuring Labor for Cane Harvesting

Cane Inspectors are responsible for achievement of planting sugarcane, procurement of enough laborers, field management, supplying seed materials, fertilizers, pesticides and weedicides, timely supply to the sugar mill, coordinating with superiors, farmers, cane harvest laborers and lorry drivers, and they spend most of their time in recording all these details. Arrangement of cane cutting/harvest workers to cut sugarcane in the field is the major task felt by the
employees. In this study, most of the employees reported major stress factor as shortage of labor, hence the sugar mills may analyze this problem and allot exclusive staff for procuring labor for cane harvesting.

8.3.2 Cane Harvesting Machines

The important factor that causes stress to the employees is shortage of cane cutting/harvest workers. This problem is mainly aggravated due to the workers’ changing attitude since laborers are not interested to work in the field nowadays. Many of the laborers migrated from their places to work in textile mills, construction and other industries. The sugar mills may take steps to set right this problem. In the situation where shortage of cane harvesting laborers existed, cane harvesting machines may be used to harvest sugar canes. So sugar mills may introduce cane harvesting machines.

8.3.3 Promotional Opportunities for Career Development

Even though many employees are well experienced, they felt that they have no promotional opportunities for career development. Sugar mills may provide employees with opportunities for growth and to prepare them to accept responsibilities at higher levels.

8.3.4 Time Management Program

The company may take some measures like conducting time management program so that the employees will learn how to manage their own time and that will lead them to improve the quality in the job. The employees should know their own role and responsibilities in the workplace, avoid procrastination, prioritize their tasks when they have to complete a few tasks at the same time and allocate specific time for performing each task.

8.3.5 Relaxation Exercises and Entertainment Programs

The study reveals that the facilities provided by the sugar mills are not utilized by all employees for relieving stress. The employees may be educated to use the existing facilities offered by their organization. Also the employees should essentially follow some other suitable coping strategies to manage stress in order to avoid health related issues, behavioral changes and decreased job performance.
8.3.6 Medical Facilities

Medical facilities may be provided to the employees who experience headache, tension, depression because all these problems arise due to work stress. Corporate fitness programs and health programs may be provided to foster a safe and healthy work environment which will reduce to absenteeism and sick leave among employees.

8.3.7 Paper Work Reduction

Those employees who do the field work and record all information about farmers, area of sugarcane plantations, visiting places and reason for visiting farmers, drawing field maps and trip sheets for lorry drivers, have to do more paper work. Paper work results in additional workload for the employees. There is a need to reduce paper work by using computers.

8.4 Conclusion

The present study concludes by throwing light on symptoms of stress, impact of stress on the employees and organizations, and the importance of stress management. It is very obvious from the theoretical and empirical data that no causes for stress can be solved without proper and adequate communication. As the stress at workplace has negative effects, the sugar mills have to acknowledge the need for fighting, solving and preventing stress at workplace. The research has brought out the connection and dependence between (a) work stressors and personal resources (b) company’s support and well-being of the workers and (c) the employees attitude and the company’s welfare. If one element goes with the other element smoothly, the outcome will be beneficial. Furthermore the significance of stress management has been emphasized which will pave way for progress. It is earnestly hoped that the sugar mills will take necessary steps to implement the suggestions of the research to relieve stress and take suitable measures to fulfill the expectation of the employees.
8.5 Directions for Future Research

1. The present study focuses on employees stress in five sugar mills in three districts of Tamil Nadu. The five sugar mills in these three districts were chosen for the study as their sugar production as well as man power is more when compared to sugar mills in other districts. Since the employees selected for the study were field staff members and working in different locations with tight deadlines, and based on sugar production as well as man power, only five sugar mills in three districts were considered. So the future studies may focus on employees stress in the remaining sugar mills in other districts to know the employees’ stress factors, health issues and coping strategies adopted in those organizations.

2. A comparison of stress problems faced by field staff members and office staff members in sugar mills may be studied.

3. Based on sugar production as well as man power, sugar mills in three districts in Tamil Nadu were chosen for the study. Considering the same factor, a comparative study of sugar mills in different states in India may be attempted which will be useful for increasing employees’ efficiency and organizational effectiveness by managing stress in the sugar mills of other states.

4. Considering the importance of human resource in organizations, this study deals with the stress management from the employees point of view. Employers also face many problems to smoothly run their business. They may have high stress while tackling employees and other resources. So, stress management may be undertaken from the management point of view.