

# A Study On Working Condition of Operating Employees in Southern Railway with Reference to Chennai Division

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**Abstract:** Indian railway is one of the biggest and largest labors, working public sectors in the world. The Indian railway is running on a success path because of its efficient staffs working on the railways. The people get services from the railway's employees through direct and indirect mode. The operating staffs work is most essential to the railways, particularly goods train. The goods train workers help in the movement of goods through railways from one place to another. For example, steel, coal, rice, medicine, water etc., the operating employees are valuable assets of the industry and they are the key to success of railways. The employees in the Indian railways having tremendous amount of pressure at the work place due to workloads, overtime work, non-regular shift work etc. In such a situation it is necessary to study the working condition of railways operating employees because if it is not balanced, the work pressure will affect their social life, health. Hence this study is an attempt to find out the factors which affect the railways operating employees and the health protection, occupational stress, running room facilities etc., And to know the real condition the operating staffs working in the Indian railways. Particularly for this study the researcher chooses Chennai division of Southern Railways.

**Keywords:** Indian Railway, Working conditions, Occupational Stress, Health protection.

## 1. Introduction

The establishment of the Railways with the steam engine occurred in Great Britain. By the end of the 18th century, steam engines were widely used to drive machinery in factories and pump water in mines. Though James Watt is generally known as the father of the stationary steam engine, Robert Trevithick was the originator of the steam locomotive. However, the earliest locomotive was built in 1804, but it was only in 1825 that the first train runs for the public. The first railway line in India between Boribunder (Mumbai) and Thane was opened to traffic on 16 April 1853. After 28 years the world's first train made its initial successful run. Lord Dalhousie formulated the plans for the introduction and extension of railways.

The construction of railways in India was undertaken to achieve a number of objectives both commercial and political. The basic purpose was to collect raw materials from different places for export to Britain and to sell British manufactures throughout India. On 15th August, 1854, the second train

service commenced between Howrah and Hubli and in the 1st July, 1856, the third train service in India and first in South India commenced between Vyasarpadi and Walajah Road and on the same day the section between Vyasarpadi and Royapuram by Madras Railway Company. Indian railway operates both long distance and suburban rail system on a multi-gauge network of broad, meter and narrow gauges. It also having its own locomotive and coach production factory (ICF) at several places in India and are assigned codes identifying their gauge, kind of power and type of operation.

### 1) Indian Railways

The Indian Railways Headquartered in New Delhi India. It is state owned and operated by the Government of India through the Ministry of Railways. It is the world's fourth largest railway network after the United States, Russia and China. The railways carry more than 30 million passengers and 2.8 million tons of freight daily. Indian Railways is the world's fourth largest by number of employees, with over 1.4 million employees. After Wal-Mart with 2.1 million employees, China National Petroleum Corporation with 1.61 million employees and State Grid Corporation of China with 1.53 million employees.

The Indian Railways is divided into several zones, which are further sub-divided into divisions. The number of zones in Indian Railways increased from six to eight in 1951, nine in 1952 to sixteen in 2003 then to seventeen in 2010, then to eighteen by adding south coast railway zone in 2020. Each zone is made up of a certain number of divisions, each having a divisional headquarters. There are a total of seventy divisions.

### 2) Railway Running Rooms and Rest Houses

For the benefit of guards, loco pilot, and engine crew, who worked on trains out of their headquarters, running rooms and rest houses, was provided at a large number of stations of Southern Railway. They need to take rest at out stations before undertaking the return trip. Various amenities, which included comfortable sleeping facilities and food facilities, were also provided by Southern Railway for such workers.

### 3) Southern Railway

Chennai is said to be the 'Gateway of the South'. Southern Railway has its headquarters in Chennai and has the following six divisions Chennai, Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Salem,

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Palakkad, and Thiruvananthapuram. It covers the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry and small portions of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. A large section of this railway zone is broad gauge lines, and only a small section is meter gauge lines. The main improvements currently in this railway zone are to convert all lines to broad gauge, improvement of stations, platform covering, better catering stalls and an automated signaling system to avoid accidents.

## 2. Literature Review

Neethu Mohan & Athira Siva Raman (2017) "A Study on Occupational Stress among Railway Employees with Special Reference to Thrissur Railway Station" had made an attempt to find the major sources and cause of stress. And they found that the employees are facing stressful situation in their work place. And they are well aware of the techniques to lower stress.

Manimekalai (2014) "A study on quality of work life of employees in southern railway with reference to Tiruchirappalli division" This study helps Indian Railways to create a positive impact on its employees by working on its improving qualities. It also accesses the quality of work life and its relationship with demographic and perceptual factors of respondents working in Tiruchirappalli division.

Parag Shil & Santa Kar (2013) "Railway employees' perception towards working condition and role performed by trade unions: a study on Badarpur sub-division of N.F railway" to measure the satisfaction of the railway employees about the role performed by the trade unions and other activities of the trade unions related to the up gradation of the railway employees. It is evident that trade unions at Indian Railway, which are operating in Badarpur Sub-division of North East frontier railways is not only playing an active role in improving the quality of work life of employees, but also in maintaining good industrial relation in the organization.

Shaik Jan Saida & B Govinda Reddy (2016) "Occupational stress among railway employees" attempts to investigate the occupational stress among railway employees working in Railways in Secunderabad Division. The results reveal that there is significant difference between long job tenure and short job tenure employees in their occupational stress.

## 3. The Research Questions

1. What is the present situation of the operating staff in Chennai division of southern railway?
2. What about the working environment of operating staff in Chennai division of southern Railway?
3. What are the changes required in the life of running staff in Chennai division of southern railway?
4. What is the inconvenience faced by the operating staff in Chennai division of southern railway?

To answer the above questions, a quantitative approach has been taken all the way through conducting structured questionnaire survey. Hence this problem was initiated.

## 4. Research Methodology

This study is based on both the source of primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from the employees of Southern Railways Chennai Division. Questionnaire method is used to collect data. The Primary data have been collected by distributing questionnaires among employees using purposive sampling. The sample size comprised of 52 employees of Chennai division. The secondary data collected from the various Acts publications, of the Indian Railways, besides annual reports and official records of Indian Railways. Indian Railways year book, several periodicals, magazines, newspapers, unpublished news and various websites including the official websites of Indian Railway Board & have also been collected and processed.

## 5. Profile of Respondents

In this majority respondents are belonging to the young age group as 25 to 30. They know the present situation of southern railways and prone to the new emerging regulations. And the experienced persons are generally accepting what they follow for most of the times.

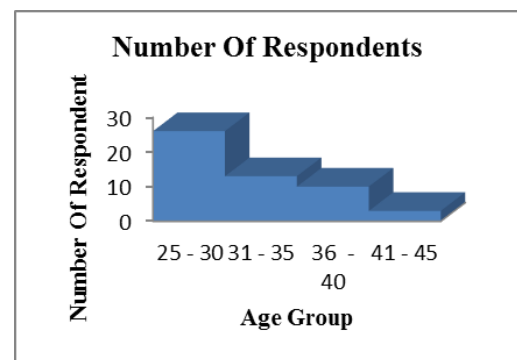


Fig. 1. Number of Respondents

## 6. Analysis

The Analysis is the process of deduce a complex element into a simple element so that it gives a better understanding about the solution. Here the interpretation of data is given below.

### 1) Effect of family attachment

The working time is not fixed. The working time is varying from time to time. It leads to reduce their spending time with their family.

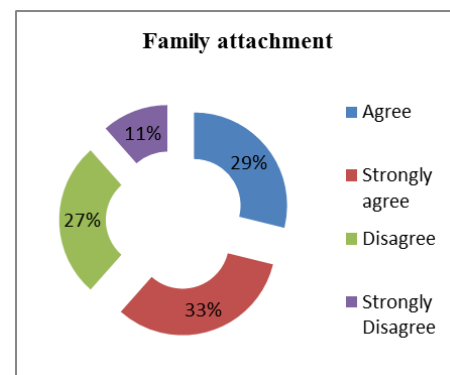


Fig. 2. Family attachment

This pictograph shows that 33% of the people were strongly agreed and 29% of the people agree that the working time change is affecting their attachment with their family. There are 11% of the people strongly disagreeing and 27% of the people disagree that the working time was not affecting their family attachment. It shows that the operating staffs spend lesser time with their family members.

2) *The biological clock of the operating staff*

All living beings (humans, animals, plants, fungi and micro-organisms) have adapted each of their biological processes to the 24-hour day-night cycle. The circadian rhythm, also known as the "biological clock", regulates in every living organism. It is necessary and important biological functions, such as the sleep-awakening cycle, hormone secretion, blood pressure and even metabolism.

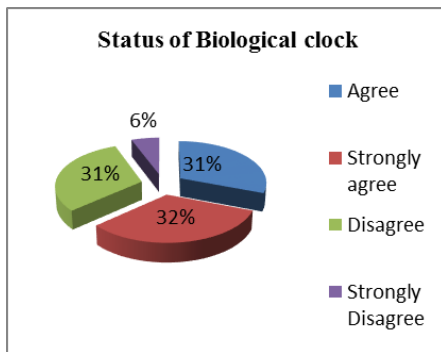


Fig. 3. Status of Biological clock

In our findings 32% of people strongly agree and 31% of people agree that the biological clock of the operating was mostly affected. Furthermore 6% of people strongly disagree and 31% of people disagree that the biological clock is not affected. But the improper working time assigned to the operating staffs affects their biological clock and affect the health of the operating staff.

3) *Leave*

The rest is necessary for the employees for managing good health. The operating staffs have sick leave, casual leave and leave on average pay etc., they can take up to 40 days paid leave in a year. The employee has to request before the concern authority. The leave is allotted by the authority to the operating staff.

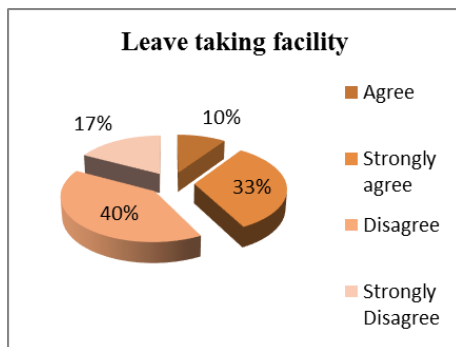


Fig. 4. Leave taking facility

This pictograph shows that 40% of the people disagree and

17% of the people strongly disagree. Further, 33% people strongly agree and 10% of the people agree that they can take leave easily. But in over all the 57% of the people are told that it is difficult to take leave. It is the discretion of concerned authority and based upon the train traffic.

4) *The change in working hours*

The operating staffs mostly work round the clock. The fact that they can claim return to the home station after completion of 72 hours' work. It seems that they came to house once in three days. For example, if they get the order from Chennai to Jolarpettai means after reaching the destination they can take rest at the jolarpettai running room. Further they can get order from Jolarpettai to renikunda. Then after reach the destination they can took rest there. And then they can reach Chennai that is their home station. As per HOER (Hours of Work and period of Rest) rule 2005, within 10 hours' relief has to give and 16 hours and 8 hours rest has to be given between every work order at headquarters and outstation respectively.

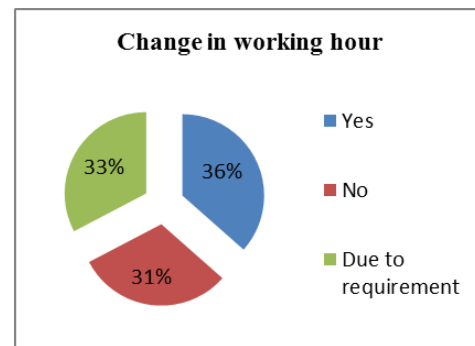


Fig. 5. Change in working hour

The results clearly show that 36% people were accepted and 31% people not accept and 33% people know that it was made due to the requirement. It shows that the rules not followed properly.

5) *The running room facilities*

The running room was arranged to the operating staff to take rest while in off duty mostly in outstation. By which they can use the running room. And they can wash their dress using the washing machine and recharge the signal lights and walkie-talkie, which was used for the communication.

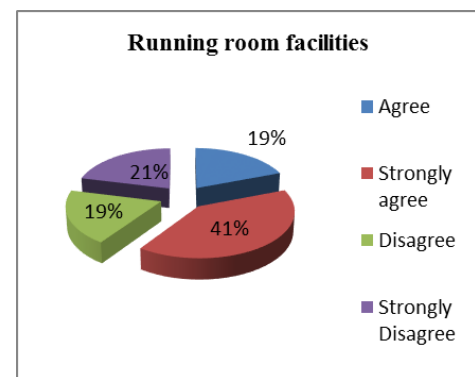


Fig. 6. Running room facilities

Result shows that there are 41% peoples strongly agree and

19% of the people agree that they using the hygiene running room facilities. But it is important to take into the consideration that 19% people are disagree and 21% people are strongly disagree. From that we can understand that nearly 40% of the people seek troubles in the running room facilities it means some station have good hygiene running room and some of station not have facilities.

6) *The supply of safety equipment's*

The railways have the duty to provide the safety equipment to the operating staff. Like the torch light and Communicating device and other equipment's.

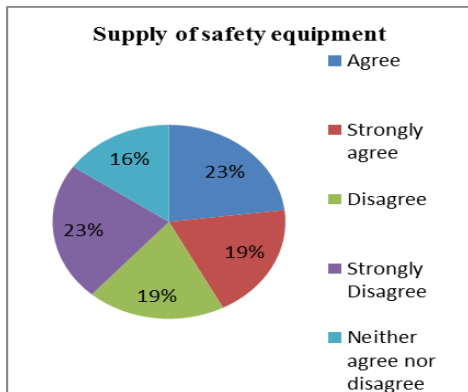


Fig. 7. Supply of safety equipment

The result shows that the 23% of the people agree and 19% of people strongly agree that the railways providing the safety equipment. Also, 19% people disagree and 23% of people have the issue in the receiving of the safety equipment's from the department. And 16% of the people neither agree nor disagree. In some places the operating staffs is required to buy for their own. Because the provided safety equipment mostly old or not in proper working condition.

7) *Medical accessibility of the railway employees*

Regarding the medical accessibility, the railway employees in particularly the operating staff getting the good medical facilities.

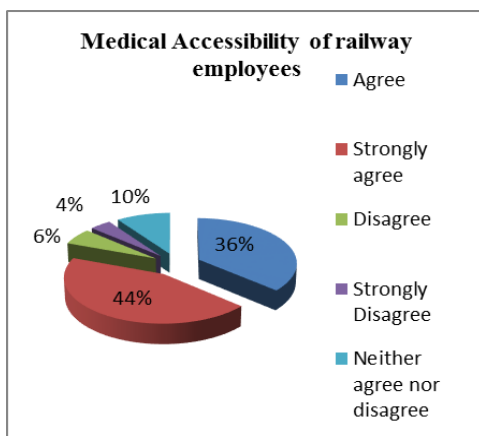


Fig. 8. Medical Accessibility of railway employees

It means they can easily access the railways hospitals and took medical check-up and treatments. And here 36% people were agreeing and 44% people were strongly agreed that they

get the medical accessibility easily. Further 6% of people disagree and 4% strongly disagree 10% are neither agree nor disagree. In southern railways particularly Chennai division the operating staffs can get the medical facilities easily without any hurdles.

8) *Condition of operating staff during the various seasons*

The season was the most important factor to decide the efficiency of the organization.

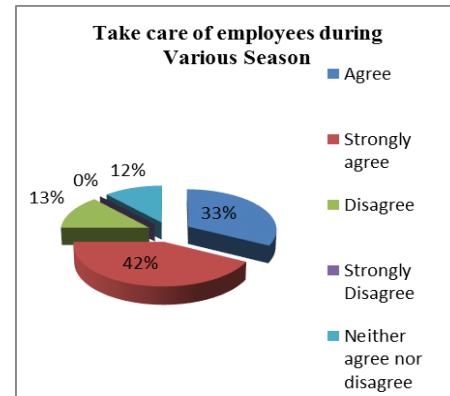


Fig. 9. Take care of employees during Various Season

Here 42% of the people strongly agree and 33% of the people agree that they were not taking care properly by the railways. Further 13% of the people disagree and 12% of the people neither agree nor disagree. In this overall 75% people feel that they not get any additional protection measures in the severe summer and winter. The operating staffs suffer in the severe summer and winter they expecting the railway take care about then in various seasons.

9) *Basic amenities for operating staff*

The operating staffs are sitting the whole day in the running train, so the basic amenities are very much needed for operating staff. The basic amenities such as food, water and toilet facilities.

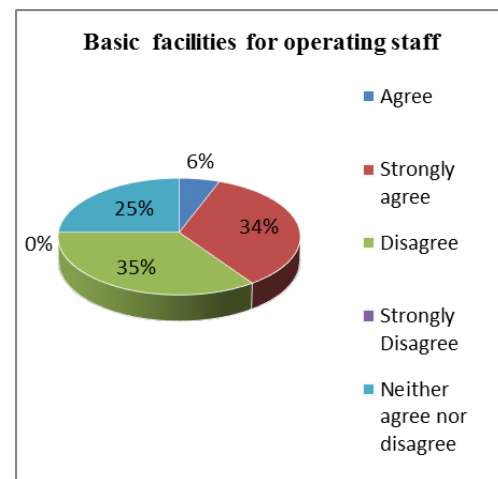


Fig. 10. Basic facilities for operating staff

Here 6% of the people agree to get basic amenities and 34% people were strongly agreeing that they are not getting the basic amenities in the running train. Further 35% of people disagree

that and 25% neither agree nor disagree. The researcher consolidated that they need more basic amenities in the running train.

10) *Level of mental stress*

They feel unbearable stress for a long period of time is often called chronic of long term stress, and it can effect on both physical and mental health. Stress is a reaction to a peril in a situation, whereas anxiety is a reaction to the stress. The loneliness in the running train is the one of the reasons for the stress.

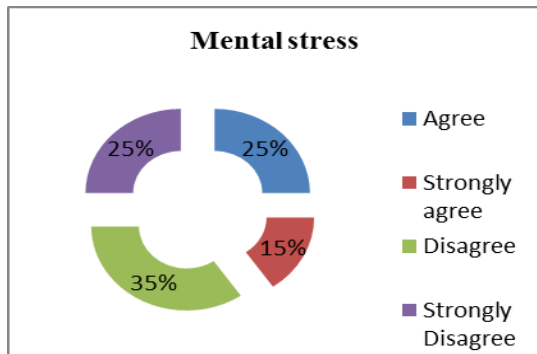


Fig. 11. Mental stress

Here 25% of the people agree and 15% of the people were strongly agreed that the operating staffs were not affected with stress. But 35% of people were disagreeing and 25% of people strongly disagreed the view. So that the researcher understands that the operating staff health affected through stress.

11) *Job satisfaction level with their nature of work*

The job satisfaction is the most important factor for the efficient growth of the organization. It is difficult to satisfy all members in their job. The job satisfaction may come due to the salary or the eager to do the work.

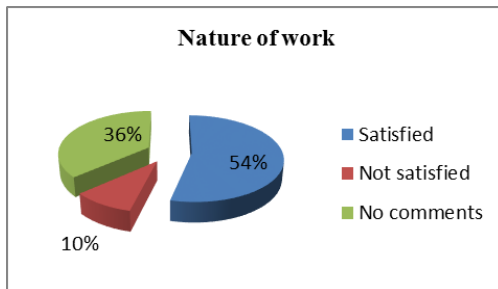


Fig. 12. Nature of work

The results show that there are 54% of the people were satisfied with their job. But 10% of the people stated that they are not satisfied with the job. And also 36% of the people were stated no comments. It shows the people working in the operating staff were satisfied with their job. They like the salary and allowances.

12) *Need positive change in the railways regulation*

The operating staff job is the blue collar job. They paid with huge salary and their work is essential service. It is more important to move the goods from one place to another from various parts in India.

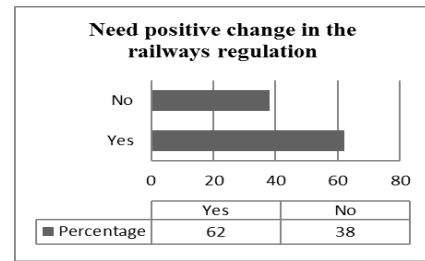


Fig. 13. Need positive change in the railways regulation

Here 62% of the people told that they required the positive change in the present regulation in the working condition of the operating staff and 38% people were stating that they not required any changes in the present working condition. So the positive measures may be accepted by the employees.

7. **Suggestions**

The suggestions are given below;

1. To make better planning to allocate the duty time of operating staff.
2. Strictly implement the HOER (Hours of Work and period of Rest) rule 2005,
3. Provide the safety equipment to the operating staff and give some refreshments to the operating staff in severe summer.
4. To provide the toilet and water facility to the operating staff, especially loco pilots and the goods guards at the train.
5. To enact and enforce the social welfare legislation towards the welfare of the operating staff.

8. **Conclusion**

The operating staff life is running with the train and railway station and running rooms. They spend lesser time with their family and their family members, due to the improper working time. It affects the biological clock of the operating staff. It can be reduced through the proper planning and allocation of the duty of the operating staff. And leave taking was a little bit difficult. The running room and other basic amenities are not as good in some of the stations. Recently a complaint launched to the divisional manager from the tiruvottiyur depot goods guard that they are not able to take proper rest at Arakonam station. The water facility and the hygiene were very poor. It was taken into consideration and it was gradually rectified by the divisional manager.

And further, the operating staff while on duty, she/he didn't get adequate facility to toilets and drinking water facilities in the train. And also it is mentioned that the severe winter and summer they working on the train the hot and cold affect the health. The employees are facing stressful situations due to the loneliness in their work place and the change in the working hours. It is happy that most of the people were stating that they are satisfied with their job. It may be due to the high amount of salary and allowances given to the operating staff.

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