



A STUDY ON CONTEXTUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF LAKHSMI SEVA SANGHAM (LSS), GANDHIGRAM



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ABSTRACT

The more organized and efficient the different components in the business are, the better it functions and produces. This research papers explores the contextual characteristics of job in the study area in terms of ergonomics, physical demands, work conditions, variety of equipments used and the working environment at the worksite to perform the activities. The study concluded that contextual characteristics in LSS were satisfactory and employees were performing their job activity at the worksite with environment where they can give optimum outcomes to the unit.

KEYWORDS: contextual characteristics: ergonomics, physical demands, work conditions, working environment.

INTRODUCTION

Organization is the strength of any business. The more organized and efficient the different components in the business are, the better it functions and produces. Breaking down tasks associated with each component and the measurement in the system has led to the concept of work design collectively. As such contextual characteristics is one of the components of work design and broadly defined as dimensions of the work environment that potentially influence an employee's creativity but that are not part of the individual. The contextual characteristics of job consist of *ergonomics, physical demands, work conditions and equipment use*. Ergonomics reflects the degree to which a job allows correct or appropriate posture and movement. The importance of this aspect of work design can be found in the extensive ergonomics literature as well as job design research (Campion & Thayer, 1985; Edwards et al., 1999). Physical demands reflect the level of physical activity or effort required in the job. This is similar to the physical ease factor identified by Edwards et al. (1999) and is consistent with the physical demand dimension highlighted by Stone and Gueutal (1985),

although we focus only on the physical strength, endurance, effort, and activity aspects of the job. The equipment responsibilities and health hazards identified by Stone and Gueutal were included as distinct factors in the present research. Work conditions reflect the environment within which a job is performed. It includes the presence of health hazards (Stone & Gueutal, 1985) and noise, temperature, air pollution, risk of accident, and cleanliness of the working environment (Campion & McClelland, 1991; Edwards et al., 1999). Equipment use reflects the variety and complexity of the technology and equipment used in a job. Although not previously assessed by job design measures, other research has identified the importance of considering the equipment and technology used at work (Goodman, 1986; Harvey, Friedman, Hakel, & Cornelius, 1988).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective of the present research work was to study the contextual characteristics of Lakhsmi Seva Sangham, Gandhigram and the specific objectives are to study the Ergonomics, Physical demands for the activities, work conditions at the



worksite, variety of equipments used to perform the activities and the working environment at the worksite.

STUDY AREA

The vision of the founder of Gandhigram Late Dr.T.S. Soundaram to create rural employment and hard work of Padmashree V.Padmanabhan and Sri.V.Krishnamuthy along with the expert guidance of Dr.Kondal Rao (founder of IMPCOPS,Chennai) to make quality and affordable Indian medicines, formed the genesis of the Lakshmi Seva Sangham (LSS),Gandhigram, in 1977. Initially started with about 17 preparations, the Siddha and Ayurvedic drug manufacturing unit today produces 240 preparations with herbs and medicines collected by traditional herb collectors, the processing done under hygienic condition with strict quality control systems monitored by doctors and technicians. The unit provides employments directly 150 women and 50 men in the processing, packaging and marketing of the medicines, particularly to the destitute, widows and handicapped. So a research has been carried out about how the unit is maintaining their work design.

METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

Exploratory method has been adopted to study the work design of LSS. The study is confined to the work design of the LSS whereby secondary was collected from the registers and annually audited statements maintained by the unit. Also using a pre-tested interview schedule the researcher collected information directly from the 150 men employees and 50 women employees of the study unit. The present study employed tools like percentage, mean, and standard deviation for data analysis.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Percentage Analysis:-

- ☒ Absolute majority (57.13%) of the managers was men and half of the computer and mathematical employees were men in the study unit.
- ☒ Minority of the employees in the sales and related department, production assistants department and office and administration support were men.
- ☒ Majority of the respondents (50.83%) worked in just adequate ergonomics condition, 28.33 % were having very much adequate ergonomics condition and 20.83 % of the employees worked without having adequate ergonomics condition in their work place.

- ☒ Half of the respondents' (50%) job does not requires physical effort, 29.17 % of the respondents' job requires less physical effort and 20.83 % of the employees' job requires lots of physical effort.
- ☒ 41.67 % of the respondents worked free from noise pollution, 25.83 % of the respondents worked with less noise pollution and 32.5 % of the respondents worked with excessive noise pollution condition in their work place.
- ☒ 33.33 % of the respondents worked with free from air pollution, 28.33 % of the respondents worked with less air pollution and 38.33 % of the respondents worked with excessive air pollution condition in their work place.
- ☒ Half of the respondents' (50%) job was free from health hazard, 37.5 % of the respondents' job was with less health hazard and 12.5 % of the employees' job was having health hazard.
- ☒ Absolute majority of the respondents' (66.67 %) job was accident risk free, 29.17 % of the employees' job was with less accident risk and 4.17 % of the employees' job was with high accident risk.
- ☒ A vast majority of the employees (65.83 %) worked in clean environment, 34.17 % of employees' job occurs in a place where there was not very dirty nor very clean and no one claimed that they worked in very dirty place.
- ☒ 25.83 % of the employees' job requires involving variety of different equipments, 32.5 % of the employees' job requires involving less equipments and 41.67 % of the employees' job requires involving simple equipments.

Mean Score of Contextual Characteristics:-

The mean score for the contextual characteristics was found that:

- ☒ Ergonomics at the work place, requirements of physical demand, noise pollution at the work place and health hazard at the worksite with mean score of 2.07, 2.29, 2.09 and 2.37 respectively concentrated around the score of average.

- ☒ Risk of accident of the job with average score of 2.62 and Cleanliness of environment at the worksite with average score of 2.65 concentrated around the score of good and,
- ☒ Risk of accident of the job with mean score of 1.95 and Equipment used in the job with mean score of 1.84 concentrated below the score of average.

Standard Deviation of Contextual Characteristics:-

The standard deviation that measures how concentrated the data are around the mean; the more concentrated, the smaller the standard deviation and a large standard deviation means that the values in the data set are farther away from the mean, on average, the present study reveals that;

- ☉ The calculated Standard Deviation (SD) value lies between .56602 and .85990 concentrating to the Mean Score between 1.84 and 2.65 for the 8 contextual characteristics that was considered for the present study as presented in table 2.

Ranking of Contextual Characteristics in Terms it's Provision Availability:-

The study found that;

- ☉ Occurrences of clean environment at the worksite was ranked 1st among the 8 contextual characteristics that was

considered for the present study, 2nd rank was given to no risk of accident of the job and no health hazard at the work site was ranked 3rd.

- ☉ Contextual characteristics such as requirements of physical demand, noise pollution at the work place, and ergonomics at the work place were ranked in the middle place among the 8 contextual characteristics that was considered for the present study.
- ☉ Air pollution at the work place and variety of equipment used in the job was placed last among the contextual characteristics in the study area.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study concludes that contextual characteristics in Lakhsmi Seva Sangham (LSS) were satisfactory and employees were performing their job activity at the worksite with environment where they can give optimum outcomes to the unit. However, it is suggested that the study unit requires looking into the area for further improvement such as, excessive air pollution, health hazard and excessive noise pollution for further development as the employees were not very satisfactory that was found from the present research work.

Table 1: Incumbent Population by Occupation

Sl.No.	Occupation category	Nos.	Age (years)		Job experience (years)		Sex (%men)
			Mean	SD*	Mean	SD*	
1	Management	07	48.71	5.22	8.57	1.9	57.13
2	Computer and mathematical	02	37.5	2.5	7.5	2.5	50
3	Sales and related	10	42.1	4.3	13.8	6.41	20
4	Protective services	05	46.6	7.83	17	9.27	100
5	Office and administration support	09	37.37	3.99	8.55	5.94	44.44
6	Transportation and material moving	03	40	7.78	7.33	2.05	100
7	Production assistants	84	42.57	5.44	12.9	6.08	28.6
Total		120					

Sources: Primary data

Note: * Standard Deviation

Table 2: Contextual Characteristics

	LEVEL OF PROVISION		
	Score 3	Score 2	Score 1
i. Ergonomics at the work place:	Very much adequate	Just adequate	Not adequate
No.	34 (28.33)	61 (50.83)	25 (20.83)
Mean Score		2.07	
SD		.70009	
Rank		VI	
ii. Requirements of physical demand:	No physical effort	Less physical effort	Lots of physical effort
No.	60 (50)	35 (29.17)	25 (20.83)
Mean Score		2.29	
SD		.79278	
Rank		IV	
iii. Noise pollution at the work place:	Free from noise pollution	Less noise pollution	Excessive noise pollution
No.	50 (41.67)	31 (25.83)	39 (32.5)
Mean Score		2.09	
SD		.85990	
Rank		V	
iv. Air Pollution at the work place:	Free from air pollution	Less air pollution	Excessive air pollution
No.	40 (33.33)	34 (28.33)	46 (38.33)
Mean Score		1.95	
SD		.84863	
Rank		VII	
v. Health hazard at the work site:	Free from health hazard	Less health hazard	Heavy health hazard
No.	60 (50)	45 (37.5)	15 (12.5)
Mean Score		2.37	
SD		.69889	
Rank		III	
vi. Risk of accident of the job:	No risk of accident 3	Less risk of accident 2	High risk of accident
No.	80 (66.67)	35 (29.17)	05 (4.17)
Mean Score		2.62	
SD		.56602	
Rank		II	
vii. Cleanliness of environment at the worksite:	Occurs in a clean environment	Occurs in a place where there is not very dirty nor very clean	Occurs in a dirty environment
No.	79 (65.83)	41 (34.17)	00 (00)
Mean Score		2.65	
SD		.47626	
Rank		I	
viii. Equipment used in the job:	Involves variety of different equipment	Involves less equipment	Involves simple equipment
No.	31 (25.83)	39 (32.5)	50 (41.67)
Mean Score		1.84	
SD		.80956	
Rank		VIII	

Source: Primary data

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