

Original Research Article

Exploring the Impact of Frequent Long-Distance Travel on Occupational Balance

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Abstract: Background: Long-distance commuting has become increasingly prevalent in urban environments and may negatively influence occupational balance and psychological well-being among employees. **Objective:** To explore the impact of frequent long-distance travel on occupational balance and psychological well-being among employees. **Methodology:** A cross-sectional observational survey was conducted among 50 employees aged 30–60 years who travelled ≥ 1 hour daily, 5 days per week. Participants were selected using purposive sampling. The Occupational Balance Questionnaire (OBQ-11) and WHO-5 Well-Being Index were administered. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation. **Results:** The mean travel duration was 107.70 ± 26.65 minutes. The mean OBQ-11 score was 19.86 ± 2.66 , and the mean WHO-5 score was 16.70 ± 3.27 . A moderate positive correlation was observed between OBQ-11 and WHO-5 scores ($r = 0.539$, $p < 0.01$). Travel duration demonstrated a moderate negative correlation with OBQ-11 scores ($r = -0.408$, $p < 0.01$) and a strong negative correlation with WHO-5 scores ($r = -0.801$, $p < 0.01$). **Conclusion:** Increased commuting duration is significantly associated with reduced occupational balance and psychological well-being among employees.

Keywords: Long-Distance commuting, Occupational balance, Employee well-being, Work-Life balance, Travel time.

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INTRODUCTION

Long-distance travel for work has become a defining feature of modern employment. Rapid urban expansion, housing affordability issues, and economic centralization have increased commuting distances globally. Research indicates that frequent commuting is associated with stress, fatigue, sleep disturbances, obesity, and reduced self-rated health.

Extended commuting times have also been linked to lower job satisfaction and diminished subjective well-being. Occupational balance refers to an individual's satisfaction with the distribution of daily activities across work, leisure, rest, and self-care. Disruption in occupational balance can contribute to burnout and psychological strain.

Previous studies suggest that prolonged commuting interferes with work–life integration and family functioning. Commuting time has been shown to negatively influence mental well-being and life

satisfaction, and in many cases, the social and psychological costs of long-distance commuting may outweigh financial benefits.

Despite growing international evidence, limited research within the Indian context has examined the relationship between commuting duration and occupational balance. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the impact of frequent long-distance travel on occupational balance and psychological well-being among employees.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed an observational cross-sectional survey design to examine occupational balance and psychological well-being among working individuals. A total of 50 employees aged between 30 and 60 years were included in the study. Participants were required to travel for at least one hour daily, five days per week, irrespective of the mode of transport used. Purposive sampling was utilized to recruit eligible

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participants who met the study criteria. Inclusion criteria comprised employees within the specified age range who commuted for one hour or more per day, including both males and females and all modes of transportation. Exclusion criteria included part-time employees and those whose daily travel duration was less than one hour.

Data were collected using two standardized outcome measures. The Occupational Balance Questionnaire (OBQ-11), an 11-item Likert-scale instrument, was used to assess participants' satisfaction with their occupational balance. Psychological well-being was measured using the WHO-5 Well-Being Index, a 5-item scale designed to evaluate overall mental well-being.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, variance) and Pearson's correlation coefficient. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.01$.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that the mean score for the Occupational Balance Questionnaire (OBQ-11) was 19.86 with a standard deviation (SD) of 2.665 and a variance of 7.10. The WHO-5 Well-Being Index demonstrated a mean score of 16.70, with an SD of 3.278 and a variance of 10.75. The average daily travel time among participants was 107.70 minutes, with a standard deviation of 26.654 and a variance of 710.41.

Correlation analysis showed a moderate positive correlation between OBQ11 and WHO-5 scores ($r = 0.539$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher occupational balance is associated with better psychological well-being. A moderate negative correlation was found between OBQ-11 and travel duration ($r = -0.408$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that longer commuting time is associated with lower occupational balance. Additionally, a strong negative correlation was observed between WHO-5 scores and travel duration ($r = -0.801$, $p < 0.01$), demonstrating that increased commuting duration is significantly associated with reduced psychological well-being. Overall, these findings indicate that longer commuting time is significantly linked to decreased occupational balance and psychological well-being.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight a significant association between commuting duration, occupational balance, and psychological well-being. The strong negative correlation observed between travel time and WHO-5 scores indicates that longer commuting hours have a considerable adverse effect on mental health. This is in line with earlier research identifying commuting as a notable source of daily stress and psychological strain.

Furthermore, the moderate negative relationship between commuting duration and occupational balance suggests that extended travel time interferes with individuals' ability to maintain balanced daily routines, participate in leisure activities, and engage in self-care. Previous literature similarly reports that long-distance commuting is linked to increased stress levels, family-related strain, and diminished overall life satisfaction.

The study also supports existing evidence that dissatisfaction with commuting contributes to lower subjective well-being. Employees who spend more time traveling appear to experience reduced psychological well-being compared to those with shorter commute durations.

While long-distance commuting may offer financial benefits and career growth opportunities, its potential social and psychological costs should not be overlooked. Strategies such as flexible working hours, telecommuting options, and greater job autonomy may help buffer the negative consequences associated with prolonged commuting.

Overall, these results are consistent with global research suggesting that extended commuting negatively influences occupational balance and overall employee well-being.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, frequent long-distance commuting significantly impacts occupational balance and psychological well-being among employees aged 30–60 years. Longer travel duration is associated with decreased satisfaction in everyday activities and poorer mental well-being.

Implementing workplace policies that encourage flexible scheduling, remote work opportunities, and reduced commuting demands may contribute to improved employee health, well-being, and productivity.

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