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Effectiveness of Psycho Education and Group Counselling in Reducing Workplace Anxiety: Evidence from Garment Factories in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study evaluates the impact of psycho education and group counselling interventions on anxiety reduction among garment industry workers in Tamil Nadu. Conducted between 2023 and 2025, the intervention reached 600 workers across seven industrial districts Karur, Tirupur, Dindigul, Hosur, Shoolagiri, Gobichettipalayam and Chennai. Workers were divided into experimental (n=300) and control (n=300) groups. The intervention, delivered by Mental Health Social Workers (MHSWs) and trained peer counsellors, consisted of six weekly sessions focusing on stress awareness, relaxation techniques, communication skills and peer support. Pre- and post-intervention assessments using the DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale) and GAD-9 (Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale) revealed significant reductions in anxiety and stress levels among the experimental group ($p < 0.01$). Qualitative feedback from focus groups highlighted improved team communication, emotional regulation and confidence in seeking help. The findings confirm that group-based psycho education is a low-cost, scalable and culturally adaptable intervention in industrial workplaces. This model provides evidence for integrating psychosocial support within India's garment sector as part of occupational health and CSR frameworks.

Keywords: Workplace anxiety; Psycho education; Group counselling; Garment workers; Social work intervention; DASS-21; GAD-9; Tamil Nadu

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Introduction

Workplace stress and anxiety are increasingly recognized as critical determinants of productivity and well-being [1]. In India's garment and dyeing sector workers often face pressure due to high production targets, gender discrimination and job insecurity. These stressors, coupled with limited access to mental health resources, contribute to chronic distress and absenteeism [2].

Psycho education and group counselling have been shown to enhance emotional awareness, coping skills and collective resilience in low-resource contexts [3]. Within the Tamil Nadu industrial ecosystem, the presence of

trained peer counsellors under professional supervision offers a unique avenue for sustainable mental health integration.

This study evaluates the effectiveness of a structured group counselling and psycho education program delivered jointly by Mental Health Social Workers (MHSWs) and peer counsellors across major garment clusters in Tamil Nadu.

Methodology

Research design

A quasi-experimental pre-post design with control



group was adopted to measure intervention outcomes.

Participants

A total of 600 garment factory workers participated, selected through stratified random sampling across seven districts: Kaur, Dindigul, Tirupur, Hosur, Shoolagiri, Gobichettipalayam and Chennai (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Total of garment factory workers participated.

Group	n	Intervention exposure
Experimental	300	Psych education+group counselling
Control	300	No intervention (routine HR wellness sessions)

Intervention structure

Sessions lasted 60 mins each, conducted weekly for six weeks within factory premises. Each group had 15-20 participants (**Table 2**).

Table 2: Overview of workshop sessions and teaching methodologies.

Session	Focus area	Methods used
1	Understanding stress and anxiety	Lecture, group sharing
2	Mind-body connection	Guided relaxation, breathing
3	Emotional regulation	Role play, mindfulness
4	Communication and conflict resolution	Interactive exercises
5	Problem-solving and resilience	Peer discussions
6	Support networks and referrals	Linking to peer counsellors & HR

Tools used

- **DASS-21:** Subscales for depression, anxiety, stress [4].
- **GAD-9:** Screening for generalized anxiety disorder [5].
- **Qualitative tools:** Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide and session feedback forms.

Data analysis

Paired-sample t-tests and ANOVA were applied to assess pre-post differences between groups. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

Findings

Quantitative results

Interpretation

Anxiety and stress levels in the intervention group showed a 40%-50% reduction, while the control group exhibited no significant change (**Table 3**).

Table 3: Anxiety and stress levels in the intervention group.

Variable	Experimental group (mean ± SD)	Control group (mean ± SD)	p-value
DASS-21 anxiety (Pre)	16.4 ± 4.2	15.9 ± 3.9	0.24
DASS-21 anxiety (post)	9.1 ± 3.5	15.4 ± 3.7	<0.01
DASS-21 stress (pre)	18.7 ± 5.1	18.4 ± 4.8	0.41
DASS-21 stress (post)	10.2 ± 4.3	17.9 ± 5.0	<0.01
GAD-9 score (pre)	13.6 ± 3.7	13.4 ± 3.9	0.67
GAD-9 score (post)	7.8 ± 3.3	12.9 ± 3.6	<0.01

Qualitative themes

Table 4: Qualitative themes and illustrative quotes reflecting worker experiences and behavioral changes following the stress awareness program.

Theme	Illustrative worker quote
Increased awareness	We never realized our headaches and tiredness were due to stress. Now we know how to relax
Peer support	Talking in a group made me feel I am not alone
Improved communication	Supervisors now listen better after attending the awareness session
Behavioral change	I practice breathing exercises before shifts-it helps me focus

Correlation between participation and outcome

This positive dose-response relationship demonstrates intervention consistency (**Table 5**).

Table 5: Mean reduction in GAD-9 scores across different levels of session attendance.

Participation level	Mean reduction in GAD-9 score
Attended all 6 sessions	6.2
Attended 4-5 sessions	4.5
Attended ≤ 3 sessions	2.1

Discussion

The results affirm that group psychoeducation and counselling, even when facilitated by non-clinical professionals (peer counsellors under MHSW supervision), effectively reduce workplace anxiety. These findings resonate with prior international evidence that participatory mental health interventions enhance self-efficacy and social connectedness [6,7].

The inclusion of peer counsellors ensured cultural



appropriateness and sustained engagement a critical factor in industrial settings where stigma often hinders help-seeking. Workers particularly valued practical coping tools such as breathing, mindfulness and problem-solving exercises, indicating the relevance of brief, skills-oriented interventions.

Moreover, improvements in communication and team cohesion highlight the secondary organizational benefits of psychosocial interventions beyond individual outcomes. This aligns with the social work perspective of strengthening both personal and environmental resources to achieve holistic well-being [8].

Conclusion

The study provides strong empirical support for integrating psychoeducation and group counselling into regular workplace welfare programs. By leveraging the dual facilitation model mental health social workers and trained peer counsellors' industries can implement low-cost, high-impact interventions that meaningfully reduce anxiety and stress.

Policy adoption under CSR funding and collaboration with local academic institutions (*e.g.*, social work departments) can institutionalize this practice. Periodic screening using DASS-21 and GAD-9 is recommended to ensure sustainability and continuous improvement.

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