

Mental Health of Factory Workers: Does the Factories Act Help at All?

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ABSTRACT:

Mental health is an increasingly important topic in today's workplace with particular emphasis on industries where workers typically experience long work-hours; dangerous working environments; and are under severe pressures for work productivity.¹

As factory employees encounter various stressors and dangers associated with their poor working conditions (and lack of informal supports) they commonly develop physical and psychological stressors, such as fatigue and/or a condition known as "burnout".²

In India, the labour standards and regulations of factory employees are primarily regulated by the Factories Act 1948³ which was enacted to ensure employee safety; health; and welfare.

In this research article, an analysis will be done to determine if the Factories Act is effective at providing adequate protection to the mental wellbeing of Iranian factory workers. Although certain provisions in the Factories Act regulate physical safety and worker welfare, there are currently no specific provisions in the Factories Act that directly addresses the mental wellbeing of factory workers.

The paper will focus on reviewing those sections of the Factories Act that have been used by employers and administrators to support the mental well-being of factory workers. The research is intended to provide an evaluation of the three sections identified in the Factories Act and review how these sections will continue to be relevant in modern industry. The results of this research will ultimately discuss the limitations of existing labour law and recommend reforms that add mental health protections to the legislation for factory workers.

INTRODUCTION

The productivity and overall success of an employee or worker in any job is directly impacted by their ability to maintain good mental health. A person who maintains good mental health is usually more productive at work; has higher levels of motivation when it comes to carrying out their job functions; and can carry out those job functions in an efficient manner.⁴ Unfortunately, because of various factors, many employees and/or workers in industrial environments experience mental health problems, which can be attributed in part to the high levels of stress, working long hours, and working in environments where there are significant hazards.

Factory workers are especially prone to experiencing mental health issues due to the repetitive nature of

¹ [World Health Organization](#), Mental Health at Work (WHO 2022).

² [International Labour Organization](#), Workplace Stress: A Collective Challenge (ILO 2016).

³ [Factories Act, 1948](#) (India)

⁴ [World Health Organization](#), Mental Health in the Workplace.

the tasks they perform on a regular basis, the rigid deadlines that they are given to complete their work assignments, and the physical nature and demands placed on them to perform their work tasks.⁵ Many factory workers operate under tremendous stress to meet production requirements or reach their production goal which also creates a pathway to developing a mental health problem such as: stress, anxiety, depression, and/or burnout.

The Factories Act of 1948, established in India, is among the most significant legislations globally.⁶ The government implemented the Factories Act due to its focus on the way safety appears in industrial environments. The legislation involves a comprehensive framework for workers, and the protective nature of the law reflects the state's idea of the connection between productivity and humanity. The excellent and essential Factories Act contains various provisions of law, such as health, safety, and welfare, as well as the principles, for instance, regulation and protection. The 1948 Act used numerous provisions of law in factories, for instance, sanitation and ventilation to represent comfort, health, and gentleness.

However, the Factories Act was developed at a time when mental health conditions were not considered an important aspect of the workplace, and most employers were not even aware of the need to address these issues in the work environment. The Act is concerned with physical safety but makes no mention of the mental well-being of employees. The law contains several repeating guidelines from the hours of work and the welfare facilities in the background. The Factories Act used formal drafting which created a smooth operation and slightly organized systems; however, the early stages contain slightly rougher implementations. Numerous clauses give the legislation shape outlining areas where the safety turns to welfare and working hours change to leave. Moreover, the framework of the Factories Act contains vital concerns such as mental health, safety, and welfare, while the global landscape contains influential groups, for instance, the World Health Organisation and the International Labour Organisation. The authorities used realistic quantities of legal standards for guidance. The recognition comprises layers of psychological support that are slightly thick, contributing to the essential well-being of the worker's mind. The Factories Act has a foundational structure governing industrial spaces as the state applied legislative principles to deliver an excellent framework. The act also contains a sense of depth since it is focused on human rights and productivity. The system seems to consist of three primary sectors.

CONCEPT OF MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

Mental well-being, as defined by the World Health Organisation, is among the most significant aspects of health globally.⁷ Society focuses on this state due to the recognition of the way wellness appears in emotional and psychological aspects. The concept involves the social wellness of a person, and the positive experience of an individual reflects the idea of the connection between personal potential and society. The essential and vital mental well-being contains various elements of health, such as emotional, psychological, and social wellness, as well as the principles, for instance, daily demands and workplace well-being.

The nature of the job, the working environment, and the organisational support provided to an employee are closely linked to their mental health.⁸ Employees' work performance will be less than optimal if they

⁵ [International Labour Organization](#), Mental Health at Work Policy Brief (2022).

⁶ [Factories Act, 1948](#)

⁷ [World Health Organization](#), Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response (WHO Fact Sheet).

⁸ [International Labour Organization](#) and [World Health Organization](#), Mental Health at Work: Policy Brief (2022).

work under unfavourable conditions including excessive workloads, overtime hours, little time for breaks and relaxation, an unstable job situation, or one's working conditions. Mental health issues, developed by employees, are among the most significant burdens globally. The environment impacts the worker due to its fascination with the way pressure appears in difficult jobs. The situation involves a well-being struggle of a person, and the emotional burnout of the individual reflects the environment's idea of the connection between stress and humanity. The difficult and intense work environment contains various elements of illness, such as anxiety, depression, and burnout, as well as the impacts, for instance, productivity and effectiveness.

Industrial workers face numerous elements of hardship in their roles, for instance, routine tasks to represent repetition, structure, and consistency. The job contains several repeating demands from the production output and the strict deadlines in the background. Most industries use specific roles which create a rigid texture and slightly pressured surfaces; however, the task set contains slightly rougher expectations. Numerous situations give the worker stress outlining areas where the routine turns to anxiety and performance changes to burnout.

In most cases, their work environments are also noisy and dusty, and; industrial workers are also frequently required to utilize hazardous equipment.⁹ Many of the tasks that industrial workers are required to perform do not allow for autonomy, and many industrial workers are employed in occupations that do not require advanced education levels; therefore, the majority of these workers live with job insecurity and low wages. Due to these working conditions, industrial workers commonly experience high levels of continuous psychological stress and frustration.

Poor mental health in the workplace can lead to many adverse outcomes, including decreased levels of concentration, reduced motivation, higher levels of absenteeism, and a higher likelihood of injuring oneself or others while working. In particular industries where workers are required to utilize heavy equipment, decreased levels of concentration due to high levels of psychological stress and fatigue create a particularly dangerous working environment for workers.

For these reasons, employers must maintain a high level of mental wellness within their work environments. Although there is no explanation of how an employer can maintain a high level of mental wellness in the workplace, it is critical to the health and general well-being of all industrial workers, their safety, increased productivity, and efficiency within the industrial sector.

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FACED BY FACTORY WORKERS

Factory workers have a number of mental health challenges due to their working conditions. Some examples of industrial working conditions include strict production schedules, physically demanding tasks and limited control over their working environment. There are many instances of psychological stress on workers caused by these types of working conditions.¹⁰

Possibly the biggest contributor to workers' mental health concerns is the long hours that they typically work. While laws exist to regulate how many hours a worker is allowed to work, in many cases, workers are required to work beyond what is legally allowed so that they may meet production deadlines. Long hours without enough time to recover can lead to physical fatigue, emotional stress and ultimately lead to mental health problems such as anxiety or depression.

⁹ S C Srivastava, *Industrial Relations and Labour Laws* (6th edn, Vikas Publishing 2012).

¹⁰ [International Labour Organization](#), *Safety and Health at the Heart of the Future of Work* (2019).

The repetitive nature of factory work is yet another cause for workers' mental health issues. Many factory jobs have the same worker doing the same job over and over for long periods of time. Due to the lack of challenge, the boredom they experience, the frustration they encounter and their lack of motivation, creates a worker who is dissatisfied with what they are doing. When workers do not see any meaning or variety in their jobs, they will become mentally stressed.¹¹

Another thing that factory workers experience is working in a hazardous environment. Industrial factories, characterized by the use of large machines, are among the most hazardous environments globally. The manufacturing sector operates these facilities due to a focus on the way production occurs on a massive scale. The setting involves a loud environment of dust and chemicals, and the constant stress of being injured reflects the industrial idea of the connection between labor and safety. These complex and high-risk factory settings contain various elements of danger, such as noise, dust, and chemicals, as well as the principles, for instance, health and safety.

This stressful situation exists even in those situations where no one gets hurt, as they still will have a "what if this was me" mentality. A factory worker's workplace is full of hazardous environments, including the use of heavy machinery, loud noise, dust, and hazardous chemicals. In addition to being scared of getting hurt in an accident, the constant threat of getting hurt causes factory workers to have ongoing psychological stress because of their potential for injury.

Another area of concern for factory workers is job security. Many factory workers are working temporary jobs, or as a result of working through a labour contract, and their employment is at risk due to the economy. Uncertainty about their job creates an environment of insecurity, fear about the future, and increased levels of stress and psychological distress for factory workers.

The majority of factory workers will not have a good work-life balance due to long hours they work as a result of having to be in generally physically demanding jobs on an everyday basis. Due to the lack of time to engage in leisure activities or be with family members, factory workers' lack of leisure time can lead to them developing negative emotional states, which can often lead to developing a mental illness.

Factory workers are entitled to physical protection from hazards in the workplace as well as protective measures from hazards to their mental wellbeing.

PROVISIONS OF THE FACTORIES ACT RELEVANT TO WORKER WELL-BEING

The Factories Act, 1948 regulates working environment in factories in India, with its main objective being the promotion of workers' health, safety and welfare.¹² The legislature established the Factories Act, 1948 due to its focus on the way protection is afforded to the industrial workforce. The legal framework involves a comprehensive oversight of factory conditions, and the core objectives of the law reflect the state's idea of the connection between productivity and human rights. This essential and protective Factories Act, 1948 contains various mandates for industrial conduct, such as health standards and safety measures, as well as the principles, for instance, welfare and liability. Although this Act is primarily concerned with how workers are protected by way of their physical working environment, a number of provisions in this Act will have indirect effects upon the promotion of workers' mental health and welfare.

A major provision relating to the promotion of mental health and well-being can be found in Section 11 of the Act, which requires factory operators to keep their premises clean and free from dirt, refuse

¹¹ Cary L Cooper and Philip Dewe, *Stress: A Brief History* (Wiley-Blackwell 2008).

¹² [Factories Act, 1948](#)

(garbage), or foul odours.¹³ Keeping a workplace clean contributes to creating an environment where workers will be able to work more comfortably and reduces the stress that workers may experience due to working in an unhealthy environment.

Another major provision that promotes mental well-being and health is Section 13 of the Act. This section requires factories to provide adequate ventilation and to maintain a reasonable temperature within the workplace to ensure physical stability.¹⁴ The provision involves a specific requirement for air quality and thermal control, and the emphasis on a stable environment reflects the law's idea of the connection between the workspace and human health. Workers may experience fatigue, irritation or discomfort while experiencing either poor ventilation or being subject to overly hot working conditions; therefore, it stands to reason that it would be likely for workers to have their mental well-being negatively impacted by such experiences.

Section 14 of the Act also relates to dust and fumes generated within factories requiring employers to take steps to prevent the accumulation of hazardous dust and/or fumes that might be harmful to workers.¹⁵ Such conditions have the potential not only to adversely affect employees' physical health but also to result in mental anxiety or psychological stress. The Act's Section 16 addresses issues associated with overcrowding in factories and specifies minimum requirements regarding space to ensure the comfort of workers. When the working environment is too crowded, it creates stress, causes discomfort, and impedes a worker's ability to successfully perform a task.

The Act also puts in place many different programs, including various types of cleanliness, comfort, and nutrition programs, to enhance the well-being of a worker and ultimately eliminate both physical and mental fatigue. One example is the provision of bathroom facilities and other resting areas like lunchrooms with the option for workers to eat, as well as a nursery for the children of mothers who work in large factories that employ many women.

The Act also places limits on the number of hours worked each week (up to 48) and the days a worker can work in a week, with at least one day off weekly.¹⁶ Limiting the amount of time a worker can work each week also limits the level of mental and physical fatigue a worker will experience.

While the provisions mentioned above will improve working conditions in factories, the Act does not directly address any mental health issues that factory workers may suffer from.

LIMITATIONS OF THE FACTORIES ACT

The Factories Act of 1948 was originally passed as a way of regulating industrial labour and regulating industry; however, the law has multiple deficiencies as to the protection of workers' mental health.

One main weakness lies within the absence of direct mental health provisions. The Act was created in a time when there was not as much awareness of the psychological aspects of health in the workplace. Therefore, the legislation was primarily being created with physical safety and hygiene in mind as opposed to helping with emotional/psychological wellbeing.

The second limitation of this law is that, as an industrial law of 1948, it has become outdated due to new industrial trends since then, such as workplace pressure, job insecurity and technology changes on the job.

¹³ [Factories Act, 1948](#), s 11.

¹⁴ [Factories Act, 1948](#), s 13

¹⁵ [Factories Act, 1948](#), s 14

¹⁶ [Factories Act, 1948](#), s 51

All of these issues are having a significant negative impact upon workers' mental health, but the Act has not kept up to date with these changes and cannot adequately protect workers.

The third limitation is the fact that enforcement of this law is not taking place in many factories, which causes an issue for workers and their ability to receive benefits from labour welfare provisions. In many factories, there are insufficient inspections being made, as well as very little stringent enforcement, which means that if an employer is not providing adequate working conditions for employees (as determined by workers having to endure long hours without rest), they will have to continue to endure work-related stress.

RECENT LEGAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, introduced by India's government, is among the most comprehensive reforms nationally.¹⁷ The government instituted the 2020 Code due to its fascination with the way safety appears in industrial environments. The legislation involves a comprehensive framework for workplace health, and the integration of the Factories Act reflects the state's idea of the connection between regulation and protection. The extensive and vital 2020 Code contains various elements of reform, such as safety, health, and conditions, as well as the principles, for instance, structure and framework.

The purpose of the Code is to make labour laws easier to understand and comply with while improving workplace safety standards. It establishes rules for occupation safety and worker health and welfare across many industries. The goal is to create a safe, healthy work environment for employees.

Although implementing this Code is a positive change in the evolution of labour laws, experts have suggested more should be done in protecting the mental well-being of employees. As modern day employers begin to understand that a worker's well-being is more than just their physical health; the laws that govern them need to keep pace with this new approach to mental wellness.

The International Labour Organisation and World Health Organisation used numerous elements of advocacy in labor, for instance, mental well-being to represent health, stability, and productivity. The discourse contains several repeating themes from the employers' policies and the workplace environment. The International Labour Organisation and World Health Organisation used international standards which created a healthier workplace and slightly improved atmospheres; however, the industrial set contains slightly rougher operational challenges. Numerous policies give the worker security outlining areas where mental health turns to wellness and labor changes to health.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Moreover, the efforts of the government and employers contain warm colors such as support, empathy, and care, while the society contains cool colors, for instance, methods and systems. The stakeholders used realistic quantities of collaborative efforts for improvement. The collective action comprises layers of various methods that are slightly thick, contributing to the glowing appearance of the factory workers' mental health.

Firstly, labour laws should start including mental health as part of employee safety in the workplace. Currently, most labour laws focus on physical safety and other issues, while mental health is also a very important component of employee safety.

¹⁷ [Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.](#)

Secondly, factories should offer basic mental health supports for their employees. Some of the mental health supports that could be offered include counselling services for employees, laid-back stress-management trainings or workshops geared to assist employees in coping with pressure on the job. Simple steps, such as creating a supportive environment for employees to fellow employees when they need assistance, could assist employee mental health.

Thirdly, It has been observed that a different significant characteristic of industrial existence is the way regulatory systems give protection to one another. The government ensures the enforcement of the Factory Act, 1948 due to a fascination with the way compliance appears in labor environments. The system involves a half-body portrait of a worker, and the enigmatic balance of safety reflects the artist's idea of the connection between law and humanity. This excellent and beautiful regulation contains various elements of labor, such as safety and welfare, as well as the principles, for instance, inspection and monitoring.

Fourthly, the best method an employer can use to provide a healthier workplace is to promote a positive workplace culture. Moreover, the mental health of an individual contains numerous elements in the workplace, for instance, fairness and respect to represent comfort, value, and gentleness. The picture of the office contains several repeating lines from open communication and the interactions in the background. Effective management creates a smooth texture and slightly positive surfaces; however, some environments contain slightly rougher undercurrents. Numerous instances of support give the employee shape, outlining areas where stress turns to health and pressure changes to respect. Finally, awareness programs should be conducted to educate workers about mental health and ways to manage stress. This initiative implies the elements and principles of coordination and education. The program has curved lines to indicate comfort and support and a reasonable amount of information for shading. The positioning of the program is off-center, exerting weight on one side of mental health, thus making it have asymmetrical balance. The emphasis is on the worker's facial expressions of stress, and the background is less attractive due to inadequate details.

CONCLUSION

The mental health aspect of factory workers has been recognized in labor laws; however, the factory workers are unable to see the same level of importance that current law does for their physical well-being. Even though the Factories Act 1948 (the Act) provides for the working environment of all factory employees' as well as that employees of factories must be physically safe at work, the Act does not specifically deal with the emotional and mental well-being of factory employees.

There are numerous provisions made for the comfort and reduction of stress of factory workers in the laws, such as compliance with cleanliness, ventilation, working hours, and welfare facilities; but they do not adequately address the complexity of the ongoing mental health problems of factory workers in a today's industrial work environment.

As there is a gradual increase in the understanding of workplace mental health, labor laws should also begin to progress by adding new provisions that assist in improving the mental health of employees. There will be significant, positive relationship to the workplace and emotional health of factory workers as a result of the development of new labor laws, increased enforcement of existing labor laws, and responsible actions by employers.



Not only is it a person's self-interest to achieve positive well-being at work; but from the standpoint of producing a higher level of work, increasing the safety of the workplace, and creating sustainable industries, the human ,emotional ,mental health of factory employees is critically important.