

## **COPING STYLES AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING AMONG INDIAN TRAIN DRIVERS**

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### **Abstract**

*Occupational stress is a universal truth at the workplace which affects the mental health of workforces. Train drivers in India may also be affected by it. Their social wellbeing is not studied yet in pursuance of coping mechanisms to deal with occupational stress. The present research study examines the relationship between social well-being and coping style among train drivers. Three hundred train drivers in the age group, 35 to 59 years undertaken through convenient sampling technique. Social Wellbeing Scale (SWS) and Ways of Coping Checklist (WOC) were used to measure the coping strategies and feeling of social wellbeing. The mean, standard deviation and inter-correlation revealed that train drivers are on the higher level of social well-being and all its dimensions. On the other hand, they were expending mixed coping style and not entirely depend on problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping. The mixed coping style significantly and positively correlated with all dimensions of social well-being.*

**Keyword:** social wellbeing, problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, mixed coping, train driver.

### **Introduction**

Mental health is defined by researchers as a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with people and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity. Keyes (2002, 2005, 2007) proposed a continuum representing positive mental health named as flourishing and mental ill health as languishing. Flourishing persons experience high levels of emotional, psychological, and social well-being compares to languishing. Functionally well or mentally healthy employees functioned superior to all others. In regards to the few workdays missed, half-day or cutbacks of work, the lowest level of health limitations of activities of daily living, health care utilisation, perceived helplessness, the fewest

chronic physical diseases and conditions. The highest levels of psychosocial functioning, functional goals, self-reported resilience, and intimacy.

Well-being refers to a person's overall feeling of good or bad. A person's well-being is sometimes confused with the satisfaction of an individual. Not only the absence of sick staff can have an impact, but present employees (known as presenteeism) who are also ill affects occupations. It includes a decrease in quality, increases in waste materials due to errors at work and lower level of performers (Steptoe-Warren, 2013). Keyes (2005) reported absenteeism which allows one to describe how one feels about one's work and how one perceives oneself as a working person. However, absenteeism is incorporated constructs like avoidance of work, withdrawal from the work role or adaptation of work environment. The significant predictors of well-being are job control and job demands (Brough & Pears, 2004), stress, demands-ability fit, and needs-supplies fit the components of P-E fit (Dewe, O'Driscoll & Cooper, 2012), task-related stressors (Grebner, Semmer, Faso, Gut, Wolfgang & Elfering 2003), active problem-solving, avoidant coping strategies, and social support (Samuel, 2010).

Occupational stress is present in any profession whereby effective coping is essential for personal well-being and work performance (Drnovsek, Örtqvist, & Wincent, 2010). Coping is the process of expending efforts to solve personal and interpersonal problems and reducing stress induced by unpleasant and stressful situations (Drnovsek et al., 2010; Skinner, Edge, Altman & Hayley, 2003). Karademas & Kalantzi-Azizi (2004) found that coping plays a potentially significant role in determining people's well-being when they confronted with stressful events. Coping conceptualised regarding the individual action that impacts the problem and influences behaviours, cognitions, and emotions (Karademas & Kalantzi-Azizi, 2004), anxiety (Coleman, 1984) that occur in response to stress (Fortes-Ferreira, Peiró, González-Morales & Martín, 2006; Hart & Cooper, 2001). Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage (master, reduce, or tolerate) a troubled person-environment relationship (Dewe, 2014; Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Lazarus, 1966 & 1990). Karademas & Kalantzi-Azizi (2004) stated that the individual evaluates his or her competence, material or other resources to cope with the stressful situation. Coping predicted psychological distress and well-being (Skinner et al.2003).

Indian railway is the backbone of the Indian transport. One cannot imagine the development of India without it. It is the premier transport organisation of the country which has the most extensive rail network in Asia. It is the world's second largest under one management.

It has one of the major and busiest rail networks in the world, moving billions of passengers and tonnes of freight annually. It provides the principal mode of transportation for freight and passengers. It brings together people from the farthest corners of the country and makes possible the conduct of business, sightseeing, pilgrimage and education.

The train drivers are the basic unit of this most extensive transport network. Their primary role is to operate the trains, attempting to keep to a strict schedule as best as possible while maintaining their passengers and their cargo safe. They perform a vital role in the transport industry today. Their job demands hard work and significant presence of mind along with the courage to handle diverse conditions. They are responsible for transporting both commuters and freight. They are accountable for trains which may operate on local or national rail networks, and they also spend time manoeuvring engines in sheds or yards.

The task of train drivers is without a doubt mentally demanding. They need to interact with inbound information, both auditive and visual stimuli, both from inside and outside the train cabin, discriminating and processing them to prepare and drive the tractive unit, to take decisions while respecting procedures. Human reliability is, therefore, one of the safety-critical aspects of the railways. The interaction with rail traffic rules, the technical safety equipment and safety management makes up the blend of safety risk factors. Human reliability depends on many factors, one of them being the recruitment of train drivers who have the required cognitive, psychomotor and behavioural abilities.

## **Method**

### **Sample**

The convenient sample has taken from the population of three hundred train drivers. The inclusion criteria were that the train drivers of mail and express train with minimum one year of experience in the same post included in this study. The sample also had a proper representation of various demographic variables such as age, experience, tenure, educational qualifications, salary, rural, urban, family background, and so forth.

The age group was in the range of 34-59 ( $M_{age}$ -45.96 and  $SD$ -6.68). The experienced group was in the range of 05-41 ( $M_{exp}$ - 19.69 and  $SD$ -7.89). Their education qualification distributed in seven cohorts, i.e. SSC (5%), HSSC (6%), ITI (29%), Diploma in Engineering (29.7%), Degree

(20.3%), Post Graduate (6.7%) and other (3.3%) respectively. Their living area classified in three section, i.e. urban (36.3%), suburban (48.7%) and rural (15%).

## **Research design**

The research design of this paper was nonexperimental and correlational as it studied the relationship between the social wellbeing and coping style. The dependent variable in this study was social wellbeing, and the independent variables were problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and mixed coping.

## **Instruments**

*Social well-being scale (SWS)*: Keyes' (1998) measures of social well-being operationalise how much individuals see themselves flourishing in their social life. The scale consists dimensions of social well-being, i.e. social-acceptance, social actualisation, social contribution, social coherence, and social integration. This scale consists of 15 items. There are five subscales and each scale consisted of three items with a relative balance of positive, and negative items, and was self-administered. On a scale from 1 to 7 (with four as *a middle category of neither agree nor disagree*), respondents indicated whether they *agreed* or *disagreed strongly, moderately, or slightly* that an item described how they functioned (i.e., thought or felt). Negative items were reverse-coded.

The estimates of internal consistency reliability for social well-being—in the long forms have all been high, i.e.> .80 (Keyes, 2005). However, in this study, the Cronbach's Alpha of SWS is .71.

*Ways of Coping Checklist(WOC)*: The checklist developed by Folkman and Lazarus (1985) consists of 42 items covering eight dimensions which can club into three factors: a problem-focused coping (consisting of 11 items), emotion-focused coping (24 items), and mixed coping (7 items on the dimension of social support). Individuals were asked to indicate on a 4 point Likert-Type of rating scale (*ranging from 0 to 3*) to what extent they tended to act in the way described when confronted with a stressful event in the past six months. Composite scores are obtained by summing across the ratings on each dimension. Raw scores can convert to relative scores. Resulting scores indicate the relative usage of three coping styles. The scale has a

high face and constructs validity. The reliability ( $\alpha$ 's) of this checklist found 0.86 in the present study.

## Procedure

The selected sample of the train drivers was contacted personally at their training institute. The purpose of the study explained to them, and their consent sought for the participation in the research. After assuring them regarding the anonymity of the results, both the questionnaires distributed to them. Though all the questionnaires were self-administered for the sake of clarity, instructions were read out to them. The subjects were requested to fill the questionnaire on the same day. While collecting the questionnaires back, train drivers provided opportunities to express their views regarding any aspect of the study. The questionnaires then scored according to the scoring keys or the procedure given in the manual.

## Results

The present investigation has been undertaken to assess the coping strategies and social well-being and their inter-correlations among train driver. The data collected from three hundred train drivers of the different zonal railway. It presented and described to yield the statistics namely mean, standard deviation to study the general nature of the data sample for the variables of coping strategies and social well-being. The inter-correlation was conducted to find out the relationship between all variables.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of the Major Study Variables*

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Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
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	<i>Obtained</i>	<i>Obtained</i>	<i>Obtainable</i>	<i>Obtainable</i>	<i>Obtainable</i>	<i>Obtainable</i>
<b>Social Well-being Subscales</b>						
Social Coherence	14.13	4.06	4.00	21.00	03	21
Social Integration	14.89	4.01	3.00	21.00	03	21
Social Acceptance	13.67	3.75	3.00	21.00	03	21
Social Contribution	14.27	4.08	3.00	21.00	03	21
Social Actualization	15.02	4.37	3.00	21.00	03	21
<b>Social Well-being</b>						
<b>Total score</b>	<b>71.98</b>	<b>13.96</b>	<b>35.00</b>	<b>104.00</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Coping</b>						
Problem Focused Coping	22.36	5.24	9.00	33.00	00	33
Emotion Focused Coping	40.94	9.72	16.00	66.00	00	72
Mixed Coping	14.46	3.91	5.00	21.00	00	21

(N=300)

The descriptive statistics for the full sample is present in table 1. It includes scores of mean, *SD*, minimum and maximum obtained and minimum and maximum can be obtainable of all dimensions of social well-being, i.e. social coherence, social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social actualisation and all type of coping styles namely problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and mixed coping. This table revealed that the mean score of the train drivers is on the higher level of social well-being and all its dimensions. It is found that subjects were high on social contribution and low on social actualisation. It can be seen from this table that mean scores of all coping styles was at the higher level. However, it is found that the mean score of mixed coping was highest than problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping respectively.

Table 2: Intercorrelation between Social Well-Being Along With Its Dimensions and All Coping Styles

	<b>Problem-Focused Coping</b>	<b>Emotion Focused Coping</b>	<b>Mixed Coping</b>	<b>Social Coherence</b>	<b>Social Integration</b>	<b>Social Acceptance</b>	<b>Social Contribution</b>	<b>Social Actualisation</b>	<b>Social Well-being</b>
Problem-Focused Coping	1.0								
Emotion-Focused Coping	.638**	1.0							
Mixed Coping	.507**	.578**	1.0						
Social Coherence	.133*	.038	.151**	1.0					
Social Integration	.066	.032	.107*	.341**	1.0				
Social Acceptance	.010	.017	.138**	.261**	.254**	1.0			
Social Contribution	.173**	.226**	.232**	.399**	.290**	.261**	1.0		
Social Actualisation	.108*	.152**	.246**	.514**	.379**	.267**	.418**	1.0	
Social Well-being	.145**	.139**	.256**	.736**	.657**	.578**	.693**	.765**	1.0

(N=300)

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 2 demonstrates the intercorrelation between social well-being and coping styles. Social well-being is found positively correlated with problem focused coping ( $r = .145, p < 0.01$ ), emotion focused coping ( $r = .139, p < 0.01$ ), and mixed coping ( $r = .256, p < 0.01$ ). Social coherence has significantly correlated with problem focused coping ( $r = .133, p < 0.05$ ), and mixed coping ( $r = .151, p < 0.01$ ). Social integration has significantly correlated with mixed coping ( $r = .107, p < 0.05$ ) only. Social acceptance was significantly positive correlated with mixed copings ( $r = .138, p < 0.01$ ). Social contribution was found to be significantly correlated with all coping styles i.e. problem focused coping ( $r = .173, p < 0.01$ ), emotion focused coping ( $r = .226, p < 0.01$ ), and mixed coping ( $r = .232, p < 0.01$ ) respectively. Social actualisation was positively correlated with all coping styles i.e. problem focused coping ( $r = .108, p < 0.05$ ), emotion focused coping ( $r = .152, p < 0.01$ ), and mixed coping ( $r = .246, p < 0.01$ ).

## **Discussion**

The present study was conducted to measure social well-being and the coping strategies used by train drivers. It was also aimed to find the inter-correlation between coping strategies and social well-being of train drivers. The results exhibit that social well-being was above the average level of the studied sample. It also found that train drivers were expending mixed coping strategies compared to problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping respectively. Social well-being associated with all strategies of coping. It reveals that mixed coping is playing a pivotal role in all components of social well-being. Problem-focused coping correlated with social coherence, social contribution, social actualisation, and composite social well-being. Emotion-focused coping is found to relate to a social contribution, social actualization, and composite social well-being.

Social well-being characterises the more public and social criteria whereby people evaluate their functioning in life. Individuals are functioned well when they see society as meaningful and understandable, as possessing the potential for growth, when they feel they belong to and are accepted by their communities, when to accept most parts of society and when they see themselves contributing to society. It is probably less evident that the dimensions of social well-being are indicative of an individual's mental health (Keyes, 2002). The level of social contact individual has with their work colleague is depended upon emotional congruence between acknowledgement against individual's desire. The congruence thwarts stress and



ultimately induces a sense of well-being (Dewe et al., 2012). The satisfaction with peers as well as satisfaction and exchange relationships with leaders predict the social well-being (Champoux, 2000 & Fisher, 2014). The work schedule of a train driver is overloaded which yields fatigues. Social well-being is an essential mediator between scheduling and fatigue (Ku, Chia-Hua, Smith & Michael, 2010). Train drivers have positive self-evaluation. They feel to be useful to the society and were full of confidence (Research, Designs & Standards Organisation [RDSO], 1999, 2014).

Karekla & Panayiotou (2011) claimed that coping could be of critical importance to well-being since it is not just the magnitude of the stressor but also the response of the organism that determine future well-being outcomes. Coping strategies play an important role in orientation to challenge conditions. Coping styles resist against the events or factors that cause stress for the individuals and the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural reactions of the individuals in an attempt to endure these circumstances. Active coping strategies protect the individuals from cognitive, environmental, and biological factors that cause anxiety depending upon individual differences (Milanlioglu, Ozdemir, Cilingir, Gulec, Aydin & Tombul, 2014). Train drivers in this study were found to be using mixed coping strategies compared to problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping respectively. As discussed earlier, higher the use of mixed strategies, higher is the tendency to use both problem and emotion-focused styles to address problem situation. Seeking social support is a strategy where both types of coping styles are used to combat stress. Dorota (2002) concluded that coping is effective when coping styles use in a proper proportion by an individual and both styles are equally available to him or her in different stress situations. The coping strategies were the mediator between occupational stress and work performance in aviation ground crews (Sun & Chiou, 2011), and firefighter (Landen & Wang, 2010).

Our findings indicate that social well-being of train drivers associated with all strategies of coping. Further, examining the significant correlation of mixed coping style with all components of social well-being, it was revealed that they are using mixed coping replicated on their higher level of social well-being. Social support is the integral component of mixed coping style. A positive relationship found between seeking social support and well-being (Chao, 2011; Mark & Smith, 2012; Samuel, 2010; Yilmaz, Arslan, SarIcaoglu & Yilmaz, 2013). Mental health of Chinese offshore oil platform workers associated with coping styles (Chen, Wong & Yu,

2009). The factors of occupational stress dispensed with social support and another coping strategy (Kumar, 2015, 2016).

In this study, two components of social well-being namely social acceptance and social integration solely linked to mixed coping style among train drivers. Social acceptance of train drivers was less prevalent than any other components of social well-being. Social acceptance is the construal of society through the character and qualities of other people as a generalised category. Individuals who illustrate social acceptance trust others and think that others are capable of kindness and believe that people can be industrious. Social integration is an evaluation of the quality of one's relationship to society and community. A healthy individual feels that they are part of society (Keyes, 1998). As discussed earlier; the job of a train driver is much overloaded despite this they are playing a role in their respective social circumstances and functioning well.

Our findings also indicate that those train drivers who relied more on problem-focused coping tend to be a higher level of social coherence, social contribution, and social actualisation. Keyes (1998) described that social coherence is the perception of the quality, organisation, and operation of the social world and it includes a concern for knowing about the worlds. Healthier people not only care about the kind of world in which they live but also they understand what is happening around them. Similarly, train driver performs their duties concerning the safety of passengers and reaching the destination on time. Social contribution is the evaluation of one's social value. It includes the belief that one is a vital member of society, with something of value to give to the world (Keyes, 1998). Although train drivers faced difficulties in balancing family-work relationship (Ranjan & Prasad, 2013), still they contribute to the commonweal. Singh, Kumar & Sharma (2007) explained that low level of depression due to occupational stress found when the problem-focused coping strategy was used to deal with stress among managers. Drnovsek et al. (2010) found that problem-based coping facilitates well-being in venture performance.

Our findings also show that train driver who is expending emotion-focused coping associated with social contribution and social actualisation. Social actualisation is more prevalent than any other components of social well-being. Social actualisation is the evaluation of the potential and the trajectory of society. It is the belief in the evolution of society, and the sense has potential which realises through its institutions and citizens. Healthier people are hopeful

about the condition and future of the society, and they recognise society's potential (Keyes, 1998). Leo & Chandramohan (2008) found that the majority of civil pilots used emotion-focused as a stress coping method. Irrespective of the research focus, the effectiveness of coping cannot be understood independently of the context within which it occurs, even though custom and practice from time to time, led to the belief that emotion-focused coping should regard as somewhat less efficient than problem-focused coping (Dewe, 2014).

### **Conclusion**

The current research has shown that train drivers are in the cohort of flourishing and representing positive mental health. The mixed coping strategy preferred by them than problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The study highlighted the crucial role of mixed coping in all components of social well-being. Our findings provided a framework of coping styles in train drivers studied in railways and suggested that promotion of mixed coping strategies might be useful in improving the social wellbeing.

### **Limitation**

Our study had certain limitations. This study had a cross-sectional design, so causal inferences could not be drawn. It would not be possible to generalise the findings to loco pilots working in other railways as this study conducted in train drivers of three railways provided a framework of coping in a cultural context. Further to this, considering the broad age and work experience range of train drivers, differences may have been present in regards to their life experience. A significant drawback of this research is given by the recognised limitations of self-report scales, which rely exclusively on subjects cognitive labels of their feelings.

### **Implication**

Some of the findings from this study have significant theoretical implications as they can support previous research which has found a correlation between coping styles and social well-being. Data collected with the used instrument may help to build train drivers social well-being profiles that could highlight the areas in need of improvement to promote mental health in the work environment. Also, the results in this study show that social wellbeing and coping style should not be taken for granted because it can negatively impact the overall adjustments of train drivers to their day to day work performance as they are safety category staff.

## Future research

Future research should focus considerable attention and effort to occupational stress research on train drivers of Indian railways just like the way most scholars are preoccupied with research on work-related stress. As mentioned earlier the significant drawback of this research was self-report scales, future research should seek to tap alternative sources of information beyond self-report. It is strongly suggested that more study is conducted in this area to gain a comprehensive understanding of coping styles and social well being of the train drivers. It has been noted to interfere with their work outcomes, health and social well-being. Therefore; further researches are needed to address this subject.

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