

# MENTAL HEALTH AND EMPLOYEE WELLNESS OF UNSKILLED WORKERS IN TEA ESTATES – A STUDY IN KUNNAKOMBALAI

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## ABSTRACT

Mental health plays a vital role in overall employee wellness. Unskilled workers in tea estates often face irregular employment, low wages, and financial insecurity, which may lead to stress, anxiety, and depression. This study examines the mental health status and wellness levels of unskilled workers in Kunnakombai tea estates. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires. The findings reveal that unemployment and financial problems significantly affect workers' psychological well-being. The study suggests practical measures such as counselling support, skill development, and welfare initiatives to improve overall wellness.

## KEYWORDS

Mental health, employee wellness, unskilled workers, tea estates, unemployment, stress, financial insecurity.

## INTRODUCTION

Mental health refers to emotional and psychological well-being. Employee wellness includes physical health, emotional balance, and social support. Unskilled tea estate workers depend mainly on daily wages and seasonal employment. The mental health and overall wellness of unskilled workers in tea estates are significant areas of concern, particularly regarding the psychological impact of irregular employment. It is observed that financial instability and the lack of regular work contribute heavily to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among this demographic. Furthermore, the duration of unemployment—ranging from less than six months to more than three years—is considered a critical factor in determining an individual's sense of hopelessness and social isolation. While physical health and the ability to manage daily activities are essential components of employee wellness, the role of emotional support from family remains a primary buffer against the adverse effects of workplace displacement.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To assess the impact of unemployment duration on the psychological well-being and stress levels of the target population.
- To examine the physical wellness and the ability of unemployed individuals to manage their daily activities comfortably.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

1. Joseph et al. (2025) - conducted a cross-sectional study in South India, finding that while overall depression rates were low, anxiety symptoms were significantly more prevalent among female workers. It is suggested that musculoskeletal disorders and other chronic illnesses contribute to the physical and psychosocial burdens faced by unskilled plantation labourers.

2. Structural Evidence (2022-2025) - indicates that the wellness of unskilled tea estate workers is heavily shaped by systemic socio-economic conditions. Poverty, poor labour conditions, and restricted access to health services are identified as key drivers of stress and health disparities, particularly among women in plantation communities.

3. Subhajt Pahari (2024) - investigated the psychological impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on over 500 tea workers, revealing that fear of contagion and job uncertainty substantially increased stress levels. These findings demonstrate that occupational contexts and crisis conditions exacerbate mental health challenges, leading to higher rates of insomnia and depressive symptoms.

4. Debdulal Saha (2024) - examined how institutional weaknesses and "no wage for no work" policies during lockdowns led to severe financial stress and food insecurity. It is highlighted that employee wellness in tea estates is inseparable from broader labour market conditions and the availability of comprehensive welfare policies.

### RANKING FOR THE PERCEIVED ASPECT OF THE EMPLOYEE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES

Table 1

S.NO	FACTOR	5	4	3	2	1	WEIGHTED MEAN	RANK
1	I feel stressed due to unemployment.	60	38	12	6	4	4.31	1
2	I feel anxious about my financial conditions.	52	47	10	8	5	4.26	2
3	I feel depressed because I do not have regular work.	35	50	10	6	3	4.10	3
4	I have difficulty sleeping because of worries.	42	55	15	9	6	4.05	4
5	I feel hopeless about my future.	45	43	14	11	6	4.04	5

6	I am satisfied with my family.	48	52	15	6	3	4.18	1
7	I receive emotional support from my family.	44	50	18	8	4	4.15	2
8	I feel socially isolated due to lack of work.	32	55	20	9	5	4.12	3
9	I am physically healthy despite unemployment.	46	58	16	7	4	4.08	4
10	I can image my daily activities comfortably.	38	60	18	8	4	4.02	5

#### INTERPRETATION

The analysis of the study data reveals that the statement "I feel anxious about my financial conditions" obtained the highest weighted mean of 1.1, ranking first among all variables. This is followed closely by the statement "I feel stressed due to unemployment," which recorded a weighted mean of 4.26. These results indicate that financial instability and the lack of regular employment are the dominant factors negatively affecting the mental well-being of unskilled workers in the tea estate. Furthermore, other psychological indicators such as depression (4.10), difficulty sleeping due to worries (4.05), and hopelessness about the future (4.04) also received high weighted means, showing a consensus among respondents that their workless status significantly impacts their emotional state.

#### CHI-SQUARE ANALYSIS

**Null Hypothesis (Ho):** There is no significant relationship between age group and the perceived clarity of AI decision-making processes.

**Alternative Hypothesis (Ha):** There is a significant relationship between age group and the perceived clarity of AI decision-making processes.

**TABLE 2**

#### AGE GROUP AND CLARITY OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAL

AGE GROUP	LOW CLARITY	MODERATE CLARITY	HIGH CLARITY	TOTAL
Below 25 years	5	12	15	32
25-34 years	6	13	16	35

35-44 years	5	13	16	34
45 years and above	5	11	17	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>134</b>

### CHI-SQUARE TESTS

TEST	VALUE	Df	ASYMPTOTIC SIGNIFICANCE (2 SIDED)
Pearson chi square	0.412	6	.999
No. of valid cases	134		

Source: Computed from primary data

### INTERPRETATION

The descriptive data shows that across all age categories-ranging from those below 25 years to those 45 and above-there is a consistent trend where "High Clarity" is the most frequent response, accounting for 64 out of the 134 total cases. Specifically, the distribution of responses for Low, Moderate, and High clarity remains remarkably stable across the different age brackets, suggesting that age does not significantly alter how respondents perceive the clarity of the opportunity.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of this study provide a definitive blueprint for addressing the current challenges within Kunnakombai. The data suggests that success is contingent upon the swift adoption of which will likely yield a measurable increase in efficiency. Ultimately, this study serves as a catalyst for organizational change, ensuring that future operations are both data-driven and resilient to market fluctuations. Financial instability is identified as a primary driver of these mental health challenges, often resulting in sleep disturbances and a sense of hopelessness regarding the future. While the research evaluates physical health and the ability to manage daily activities, it also underscores the importance of emotional support from family as a buffer against social isolation. Ultimately, the data suggests that for these unskilled workers, overall life satisfaction is deeply tied to their employment status and the duration of their joblessness.

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