

A Study on Employee Challenges in Warehouse Operations:

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Abstract- *The warehousing and logistics sector has undergone rapid transformation driven by e-commerce growth, globalisation, and rising delivery expectations, placing considerable operational and human strain on warehouse employees. While extensive research addresses warehouse efficiency, automation, and supply chain optimisation, the human resource dimension — physical strain, psychological pressure, training gaps, and organisational support — remains comparatively under-examined, particularly within the Indian e-commerce context. This study investigates the challenges faced by warehouse employees at Flipkart's logistics arm, Ekart, using a descriptive research design combining primary survey data with secondary industry sources. A structured questionnaire was administered to 203 warehouse employees across roles including inventory executives, supervisors, store keepers, warehouse managers, and pickers/packers, capturing perceptions on training adequacy, safety, workload, supervisory support, communication, equipment condition, technology adoption, and work-life balance. Findings reveal a young, well-educated, male-majority workforce with high early-career turnover, widespread physical fatigue (69%), heavy reliance on overtime (87% report working overtime), inconsistent training quality, and moderate but incomplete recognition from management (48% feeling valued). Conversely, employees expressed strong confidence in workplace technology (73% affirming its productivity value) and generally positive views of safety provisions and supervisory support. The study concludes that the dominant challenges are organisational and human rather than technological — chiefly staffing adequacy, training standardisation, and recognition — rather than a shortage of digital tools. Practical recommendations include reviewing peak-period staffing, standardising frontline training, strengthening recognition and communication practices, and continued incremental technology investment. These insights offer warehouse operators and HR practitioners an evidence-based basis for improving employee wellbeing, retention, and operational resilience in a rapidly scaling sector.*

Keywords - *Warehouse employees, Employee challenges, Job satisfaction, Workplace safety, E-commerce logistics, Employee turnover, Warehouse automation, Ekart/Flipkart*

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, warehousing has shifted from simple storage into a high-pressure operational hub shaped by e-commerce growth and rising delivery expectations. Employees face physically taxing duties (lifting, sorting, packing) under productivity quotas and monitoring technologies, alongside automation-driven upskilling pressures and organisational and interpersonal hurdles — communication gaps, limited career growth, and irregular schedules.

Despite their essential role, warehouse workers' conditions have drawn less academic attention than operational or supply-chain topics, even though turnover, absenteeism, and disengagement carry direct performance costs. The study is set within Flipkart, India's leading e-commerce marketplace (founded 2007, majority-owned by Walmart), and its logistics subsidiary Ekart, which operates over 70 fulfilment centres, more than 80 sortation facilities, over 3,500 delivery hubs, and more than 50 million cubic feet of warehousing space nationally. Given Ekart's scale and continued expansion — including quick-commerce via Flipkart Minutes — understanding employee experience in this environment is both academically relevant and organisationally urgent.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

The study is grounded in four organisational behaviour frameworks: Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (hygiene vs. motivator factors), the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Vroom's Expectancy Theory — together framing warehouse strain as an interaction of physical demands, limited resources, and monitoring-driven pressure.

Reviewed literature spans turnover drivers (Min, 2007); physical and psychological strain under electronic monitoring among Amazon warehouse workers (Gutelius & Pinto, 2023; Oxfam-PolicyLink); ergonomic risk studies (Winkelhaus et al., 2022; RULA/REBA-based assessments); labour-market data on injury rates (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics) and employee sentiment (Kahoot!/Researchscape, Instawork); automation's labour effects (Acemoglu & Restrepo); and India-specific gig and platform economy research.

Research gaps identified:

- Most empirical research on major e-commerce warehouse operations is concentrated in the US and other developed markets, with little India-specific study despite India's distinct labour characteristics (high contractual/seasonal employment).
- Existing studies examine ergonomic, psychological, turnover, and automation dimensions in isolation rather than holistically.
- Warehouse and fulfilment employees are rarely studied as a distinct category separate from gig delivery riders.
- Company-specific empirical research on a major Indian e-commerce platform's own warehouse workforce is limited — a gap this study addresses using Flipkart/Ekart as the organisational context.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

Objectives

- Identify key challenges faced by warehouse employees at Flipkart/Ekart.

- Examine the impact of these challenges on performance, motivation, and job satisfaction.
- Assess physical, psychological, and organisational dimensions and their relative influence.
- Explore the relationship between working conditions and turnover/absenteeism.
- Evaluate how well existing organisational practices address identified challenges.
- Recommend practical measures to improve wellbeing, engagement, and retention.

Hypotheses

- H1/H0 (Physical conditions): Physical working conditions are/are not significantly related to job satisfaction.
- H1/H0 (Monitoring): Performance-monitoring practices are/are not significantly related to employee stress levels.
- H1/H0 (Career growth): Employees with limited career growth report significantly lower/no different job satisfaction than those with clear advancement pathways.
- H1/H0 (Employment type): Employment type (permanent vs. seasonal/contractual) is/is not significantly related to perceived job security.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Design: Descriptive, mixed-methods (quantitative + qualitative).
- Data sources: Primary (structured questionnaire and informal interviews with staff/supervisors); Secondary (company reports, industry publications, academic literature).
- Sampling: Convenience/stratified sampling across roles, shifts, and employment types.
- Sample size: 203 valid respondents.
- Instrument: Structured questionnaire — Section A (demographics), Section B (Likert/rating items on operations and working conditions), Section C (technology preferences and overtime).
- Analysis tools: Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means); chi-square/correlation analysis where applicable; Excel/SPSS for tabulation.

V. RESULTS

- Demographics: 71.5% of respondents under 30; 73% male, 27% female; two-thirds graduate/postgraduate; largest role groups were Inventory Executives (22.8%) and Supervisors (18.8%); 40% had under 1 year of experience.
- Perceived challenges: 48.3% agreed operational challenges exist; only 10.6% disagreed.
- Training: 49% rated training favourably; 31.7% rated it poorly — signalling inconsistency.
- Safety: 55.2% expressed confidence in safety; 25.8% dissatisfied.
- Workload/fatigue: Majority reported moderate-to-severe workload impact on productivity; 69% reported physical fatigue.
- Staffing/PPE: 57.9% felt staffing was adequate (42.1% doubtful or reporting shortages); 60.9% said PPE was reliably available.
- Technology: 72.8% agreed digital tools (WMS, ERP, barcode, RFID) improved productivity; only 2.5% disagreed.
- Motivation/recognition: 48% felt valued; 21.8% felt unappreciated; 30.2% neutral.
- Overtime: 86.8% reported working some overtime; 45.9% worked more than 6 hours/week.
- Technology priorities: Faster ERP/software interfaces (39.6%) and real-time inventory tracking (33.7%) were the top requested upgrades.

VI. DISCUSSION

The results indicate that the core strains on Flipkart/Ekart's warehouse workforce are organisational and human, not primarily technological. Employees already view existing digital tools favourably, suggesting automation and monitoring systems are not, in themselves, the main source of dissatisfaction — rather, it is staffing adequacy, workload distribution, training consistency, and recognition that drive the friction identified.

This aligns with the JD-R model: elevated demands (workload, overtime, physical strain) are not being adequately offset by resources (staffing, training, recognition), a pattern consistent with the Amazon-focused literature (Gutelius & Pinto, 2023) despite

the distinct Indian labour context (a young, highly educated, high-turnover workforce). The gap between general satisfaction and felt recognition mirrors Herzberg's hygiene-motivator distinction: safety and pay-related "hygiene" factors are broadly acceptable, but "motivator" factors — recognition, growth, engagement — remain underdeveloped.

VII. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing: Reassess workforce planning against peak-period demand to reduce structural reliance on overtime.
- Training: Standardise onboarding and skill-building programmes, particularly for frontline roles (store keeping, picking/packing) where preparedness is weakest.
- Recognition and communication: Introduce formal recognition schemes and structured feedback channels to close the gap between operational satisfaction and felt appreciation.
- Technology investment: Continue incremental upgrades — faster ERP interfaces, real-time inventory tracking, and automation for physically demanding tasks — building on already-positive employee sentiment toward digital tools.
- Wellbeing infrastructure: Strengthen welfare facilities, stress-management support, and fair scheduling to address fatigue and work-life balance concerns.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This employee-perspective study of 203 warehouse workers at Flipkart/Ekart demonstrates that warehouse challenges are shaped less by technology gaps and more by workload pressure, staffing adequacy, training consistency, and recognition. While employees hold broadly positive views of safety measures, teamwork, supervisory support, and available technology, persistent overtime, physical fatigue, and uneven training point to areas requiring targeted intervention. The study's objectives were substantially met, offering evidence-based insight to inform HR policy and operational strategy in a rapidly scaling e-commerce logistics environment.

IX. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

- Findings are confined to a specific facility or set of facilities and may not generalise across all Flipkart/Ekart operations or the wider warehousing industry.
- Sample size, while reasonable for an academic project, may not capture the full diversity of the workforce.
- Self-reported questionnaire data is subject to potential social desirability bias.
- Data reflects a single time period and does not capture seasonal variation (e.g., peak sales vs. regular periods).
- Access to internal company records (turnover rates, injury statistics) was limited, requiring reliance on secondary sources.

Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to capture seasonal fluctuation, extend comparative analysis across multiple warehouse operators, incorporate objective HR data (verified turnover/absenteeism records), and test the proposed hypotheses using formal inferential statistics (chi-square, correlation, regression) rather than descriptive analysis alone.