



# A STUDY ON STRESS AMONG WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

Women are playing a vital role in the economic and social development of the nations all over the world. Women in India have proved their mettle in the work domain. Behind such success lies a big story of struggle and freedom in the traditional social arena. Besides, changing roles of working women, they have maintained the traditional work ethos of household. This study is devoted towards finding the symptoms and causes faced by the working women. It also aims at finding feasible solutions that have been practiced elsewhere and needs to be adopted at other social fronts. That means for working women it is two sets of overlapping responsibilities. Therefore, in addition to their traditional roles, professional roles seem to be one of the major sources of stress that working women have to face. This study gives information about working women stress, symptoms and causes stressful situations in working women.

**Keywords:** Stress, working women

## 1. Introduction

Stress is difficult to define precisely. The concept of stress was first introduced in the life sciences by Selye Hans in 1936. It was derived from the Latin word 'stringere'; it meant the experience of physical hardship, starvation, torture and pain. Selye Hans, 1936 defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it". Further, stress was defined as "any external event or internal drive which threatens to upset the organismic equilibrium". Another definition given by Stephen stress has been stated as "a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he/she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important." According to Robbins and Sanghi "A dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraints, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important." Stress affects not only our physical health but our mental wellbeing, too.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the stress symptoms of women employees
2. To provide recommendations to effectively manage the stress level among women employees.

## 3. Methodology

The study is based on the secondary data. The secondary data was collected from various published sources like ILO reports, journals, and websites.



#### 4. Review of Literature

- Hashmi et al. found that working married women have to face more difficulties in their lives like they experienced more stress and depression as compared to non-working married women.
- Chaudhari et al. studied that increase in stress levels are found in female health care professionals in the Eastern part of India due to shortage of manpower, lack of infrastructure, long emergency duty hours and inadequate remuneration for their hard work. Practicing relaxation exercises had decreased not only the stress levels but also increased the quality of their life and most important patient care.
- The researchers agree that occupational stress is a serious problem in many organizations (Cooper and Cartwright, 1994; Varca, 1999; Ornelas and Kleiner, 2003).
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports that inefficiencies arising from occupational stress may cost up to 10 percent of a country's GNP (Midgley, 1996).
- Occupational stress often shows high dissatisfaction among the employees, job mobility, burnout, poor work performance and less effective interpersonal relations at work (Manshor, Rodrigue and Chong, 2003).
- Johnson (2001) similarly argued that interventions like identifying or determining the signs of stress, identifying the possible causes for the signs and developing possible proposed solutions for each signs are required.

#### 5. Symptoms of stress

**Cognitive symptoms:** Memory problems, inability to concentrate, poor judgment, seeing only the negative, anxious, constant worrying.

**Emotional symptoms:** Moodiness, irritability or short tempered, agitation, sense of loneliness & isolation, depression or general unhappiness.

**Physical symptoms:** Aches and pains, diarrhea or constipation, nausea, chest pain, rapid heartbeat etc.

**Behavioral symptoms :** Eating more or less, sleeping too much or too little, isolating yourself from others, using alcohol, cigarettes, nervous habits (nail biting) etc.

Many health problems are caused by stress. The modern world, which is said to be a world of achievements, is also a world of stress (Tyagi&Sen 2000) Role stress may occur because of conflict between work and non-work activities (O' Driscoll 1992). Women play a dual role wife, mother, sister, daughter in law & so on at home and professional at workplace.

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## 6. Causes of stress

### External causes of stress:

- Major life changes
- Financial problems
- Work being too busy
- Relationship difficulties
- Children & family.

### Internal causes of stress:

- Chronic worry
- Unrealistic expectations
- Rigid thinking
- Lack of flexibility
- Negative self-talk etc.

## 7. Role of working women to reduce workplace Stress

Whether or not you are in a job where the environment has become increasingly stressful, you can keep a great measure of self-confidence and control through understanding and practicing emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to both manage and use your emotions in ways that are constructive and positive. In relation to work and success, emotional intelligence is just as relevant and important as intellectual ability. Emotional intelligence involves communicating with others in ways that draw them to you while overcoming difference, defusing tension, stress, and repairing wounded feelings.

- **Self-Management:** Self-management is the ability to control your emotions and your own behaviors, adapting to the circumstances you find yourself in.
- **Self-Awareness:** Self-awareness is the ability to recognize your own emotions as well as their impact, using your gut feelings in order to guide the decisions you make.
- **Social Awareness:** Social awareness involves the ability to sense, understand, and react to the emotions others are experiencing and the ability to feel comfortable socially.
- **Relationship Management:** Relationship management involves the ability to inspire, connect with, as well as influence others and the ability to manage conflicts that arise.

## 8. Role of employers or managers to reduce workplace Stress

As far as managers are concerned, it is in their best interest to keep the stress levels in the workplace to minimum levels. Managers can act as positive role models



particularly during times of high stress. If a manager has the ability to remain calm in work situations that are stressful, it is far easier for their employees to remain calm. In addition, there are several organizational changes that employers and managers can make in order to reduce workplace stress, presented below.

- Giving importance to individual work
- Provide opportunities for career development
- Establish a zero-tolerance policy for harassment
- Offer rewards and incentives for good work and performance
- Clearly define employees' roles and responsibilities
- Consult employees about scheduling and work rules
- Provide opportunities for social interaction among employees
- Make communication friendly and efficient
- Giving importance in decision making

#### **9. How to reduce stress among working women**

It is very important that an organization takes this issue seriously. The organization can help reduce stress by:

- Female employees may find that they do not have enough time to spend with their newborn if they have just had a baby. Providing longer maternity leave could help female employees to come back to work without having too much on her mind with regard to the baby and any postnatal depression.
- Reducing the number of hours for which their employees would have to work per week. This will, in the long run, contribute to a more efficient functioning of the organization, as employees would have more time to rest at home and will come back the next day feeling refreshed.
- Working hours should be flexible. This may also include shifts and the rotation of employees. A tried and tested technique that many organizations have begun using is the provision of lounges and other recreational facilities to help employees relax during the day should they require some time off.
- Another idea would be to provide childcare facilities at the office so that mothers with young children could peek in and ensure their kids are okay every few hours.
- As an employee, you should also make it a point to occasionally have a casual chat with employees to ensure that they are satisfied with their jobs and have no issues at work.
- Also encourage them and appreciate and praise her for tasks carried out very well. This would reduce any worries they may have of the risks of losing their jobs and help them to feel more secure.



## 10. Recommendations

Working women should try to modify changing the stressful situation, and find some time to move away for rest and relaxation. The first step is to recognize the true sources of stress.

- Unhealthy methods and which reduce stress temporarily are smoking, drinking, using pills for relax, drinking too much, sleeping too much and out bursts.
- Complaining surely creates more stress this means every time you complain about your work and blame your boss for your situation, you are literally throwing away your happiness.
- Walking will increase the heart rate and relive you from the stress. Activities that are continuous and rhythmic—and require moving both your arms and your legs—are especially effective at relieving stress (Walking, running, swimming, and aerobic classes are good choices. One should try to make a conscious effort to focus on body and the physical (and sometimes emotional) sensations experienced while moving.
- Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- Create an effective and supportive relationship between employees and peers.
- Reduce personal conflict on the job.

## 11. Conclusion

Stress in the work place for women is a commonality throughout India and world in every business. Managing that stress becomes vital in order to keep up job performance as well as relationship with co-workers and family members. Changing the work environment relives work stress. Making the environment less competitive between employees decreases some amounts of stress.

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