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### Some Comparative Studies on Stresses in Working & Non-Working Women in India

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#### Abstract

This study focuses on the management of stress in working and non working women aspects that are the life events and situations, the interaction of the individual with them and the responses generated. In other words the issue related with psycho-social stress and coping strategies has been dealt with in this work. This is a comparative study to assess the levels of stress among working and non working women that attempts to address certain aspects of the stress and their health related consequence in women from two different kinds of families - joint family and nuclear family. This study also focuses on the issue of stress and work family conflict among working women in their family. It has been observed that women have taken on multiple roles to adapt to changes in today's society. They continue to meet household and family responsibilities, while at the same time working outside the home and trying to pursue personal interests. Women can view these roles as challenges, or they can perceive them as threats. As the demands increase to fulfill these roles, women often feel a sense of helplessness and loss of control, making them prone to stress and burnout.

#### Keywords:

*Health Stress, Family Stress, Working Women, Non-Working Women, Work-Family Conflict*

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#### Introduction and Background

Stress is commonly used term. It has been used in different contexts with different meanings. Stress can be defined as a real or interpreted threat to the physiological or psychological integrity of an individual that results in physiological and behavioral responses. It is said that people strive to obtain and protect resources; stress ensues when there is a threatened or actual loss of resources [4].

Stress can also be seen as the reaction of people, who are under excessive pressures and other type of demands placed on them. Wayne Weiten described stress as any circumstance that threatens or is perceived to threaten one's well-being and that thereby taxes one's coping abilities. It can also be conceptualized in terms of an imbalance between the perception of demand and the perception of the ability to cope with it [2].

Once induced by stressors, the internal stress state can then lead to various responses. On the hand, it can result in a number of physical, bodily

responses. On the other hand, psychological responses such as anxiety, hopelessness, depression, irritability, and a general feeling of not being able to cope with the world can result from the stress state [3].

Maskowska Z. (1995) identified six common life roles. He indicated that the need to balance these different roles simultaneously is a reality for most individuals at various stages throughout their lives. Rather than following a transitional sequence from one role to another, women are required to perform an accumulation of disparate roles simultaneously, each one with its unique pressures [5]. Multiple role-playing has been found to have both positive and negative effects on the mental health and well-being of professional women. In certain instances, women with multiple roles reported better physical and psychological health than women with less role involvement. In other words, they cherished motivational stimulation, self-esteem, a sense of control, physical stamina, and bursts of energy [6]. However, multiple roles have also been found to cause a variety of adverse effects on women's mental and physical health, including loss of appetite, insomnia, overindulgence, and back pains [7].

Motivation for the paper work is to find answers to the following questions related to educated women in our society: Do women from families not having tradition of earning money on account of working outside their houses or having employment, experience more stress at their home and place of their work/ employment, than those women with such traditions in their families?

### **Research Questions**

- Do women working at different organizational levels (low, middle, and high) differ in the nature and degree of *home and work stress* they feel and the use of strategies to cope-up with their stresses?
- What are the socio-cultural (type of family, family values), contextual (type of working environment in the organization, family support, marital adjustment) and personal factors (marital status, family size, age, education, concept about herself) that promote and constrain women's participation in work?

### **Hypothesis**

Thus the Hypothesis of my investigations may be summarized as given below:

- There may be a significant difference between level of stress between working and non working women.
- Working women from joint families differ in the degree of family-stress and occupational-stress and the use of coping strategies than that of working women from nuclear family.
- Married and unmarried women would differ in the family stress and occupational stress and use of coping with them.

- Women from differing job status would differ in the family stress and occupational stress and coping strategies.

There may be significant association of level of stress among working/non-working women with selected demographic variables.

### Research Method

Descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. It does not answer questions about how/when/why the characteristics occurred. Variables in this study are:

- Study Variable: Stress among working and non working women.
- Attribute Variable: Sex, Age, Education, Religion, Habits, Family background.

Social research is research conducted by social scientists and which follows by the systematic plan. Social research methods can generally vary along a quantitative/qualitative dimension.[1]

This study is conducted on 60 working and 60 non-working women that were sampled randomly from a population of educated women from nuclear/ joint families in the city of Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, India.

A questionnaire is prepared (Table 1) and the same is distributed among sampled women as per their language convenience. A brief interview is also conducted while collecting the responses from these women to have an idea about their attitude of answering the questions. Frequency of response to the different questions is counted and tabulated as shown in Table-2.

**Table I**

(1 of 2)

Name.....	Marital status.....
Age.....	Income level of the family.....
Gender.....	No. of children.....
Address.....	Types of husband work.....
Job.....	Husband income.....
Types of family.....	

**This stress test is intended to give you an overview of your stress levels only. Tick mark suitable answer in following questions. Your answer would be kept confidential.**

Q1. How often you face stress situation being taken care of your family?

- a. Mostly
- b. Rarely
- c. Frequently
- d. Not at all

Q2. How do you handle Stress situations?

- a. Optimistically

- b. With the help of others
- c. Depends upon level
- d. With the help of family

Q3. How often you face stress Situation in your daily life?

- a. Mostly
- b. Rarely
- c. Sometimes
- d. Not at all

Q4. Most of your Stress are related to :

- a. Work Environment
- b. Family Environment
- c. Supervision
- d. Workgroup
- e. Social Injustice

Q5. How do you feel while working in the organization?

- a. Great
- b. Satisfied
- c. Unable to concentrate
- d. Frustrated
- e. Depressed

Q6. How do you feel while working in the house?

- a. Great
- b. Satisfied
- c. Unable to concentrate
- d. Frustrated
- e. Depressed

(2 of 2)

***This stress test is intended to give you an overview of your stress levels only***

Answer **all** the questions but just tick one box that applies to you, either yes or no. Answer yes, even if only part of a question applies to you. Take your time, but please be completely honest with your answers: **Yes, No** .

Your answer would be kept confidential.

SN	QUESTION	Ye s	N o
1	I frequently take my office work to my home.		
2	Not enough hours in the day to do all the things that I must do		
3	I deny or ignore problems in the hope that they will go away		
4	I do the jobs myself to ensure they are done properly		
5	I underestimate how long it takes to do things		
6	I feel that there are too many deadlines in my work /life that are difficult to meet.		

7	My self confidence / self esteem is lower than I would like it to be		
8	I frequently have guilty feelings if I relax and do nothing		
9	I find myself thinking about problems even when I am supposed to be relaxing.		
10	I feel fatigued or tired even when I wake after an adequate sleep		
11	I often nod or finish other peoples sentences for them when they speak slowly.		
12	I have a tendency to eat, talk, walk and drive quickly		
13	My appetite has changed, have either a desire to binge or have a loss of appetite / may skip meals.		
14	I feel irritated or angry if the car or traffic in front seems to be going too slowly/ I become very frustrated at having to wait in a queue.		
15	If something or someone really annoys me I will bottle up my feelings		
16	When I play sport or games, I really try to win whoever I play		
17	I experience mood swings, difficulty making decisions, concentration and memory is impaired.		
18	I find fault and criticize others rather than praising, even if it is deserved		
19	I seem to be listening even though I am preoccupied with my own thoughts.		
20	My sex drive is lower, can experience changes to menstrual cycle.		
21	I find myself grinding my teeth.		
22	Increase in muscular aches and pains especially in the neck, head, lower back, shoulders.		
23	I am unable to perform tasks as well as I used to, my judgment is clouded or not as good as it was.		
24	I find I have a greater dependency on alcohol, caffeine, nicotine or drugs.		
25	I find that I don't have time for many interests / hobbies outside of work.		

**Table-2: Frequency of response from 60 working and 60 non-working female population against the questionnaire**

Q.No.	Q. No: 1		Q. No: 2		Q. No: 3		Q. No: 4		Q. No: 5		Q. No: 6	
Part	W	NW	W	NW	W	NW	W	NW	W	NW	W	NW
a:	16	5	12	2	8	35	27	0	15	0	28	8
b:	28	8	4	15	9	14	15	30	35	0	20	5
c:	12	17	29	10	40	10	7	12	6	0	8	2
d:	4	30	15	33	3	1	6	3	4	0	4	25
e:							5	15			0	20

W= Working,

NW= Non-Working

Results are discussed from the following point of view:

1. stress resource
2. stress handling
3. stress in daily life
4. stress are related
5. feelings, while working in organization
6. feelings, while working in house
7. mental health
8. physical health
9. worst thing when she faced with stress
10. best thing or work when she faced with stress

Further the frequency of response to each question is plotted as bar chart to indicate the confidence of majority and minority of respondents towards various options of the question that are indicative of different level of stress where different questions are designed to address different aspects of stresses.

## Results

Major findings of the study are as follows:

1. Most of the non-working women feel high stress compared to that of working women which are attributed to their high ambitions that are suppressed due to their family and social circumstances viz family traditions, family economic conditions etc. Some women compromise to cope up with their poor economic conditions, hence feel less stress.
2. Non-working women can better handle the stress situations with the help of family in comparison to that of working women.
3. Most of the working women who come from nuclear family face the stress sometimes in their daily life due to absence of supporting hands for

them, where as such cases are observed comparatively less for non-working women from nuclear families.

4. The stresses in non-working women are related to social injustice like their family mind setup that do not let them go out to earn money and take independent decisions related to money matters.
5. Most of working women feel satisfied while working in their organization like educational institutions and some of them feel great due to holding administrative posts.
6. Working women while working in their home they feel great but non-working do not feel so. Working women are satisfied but non- working women are not satisfied while working at home.

Thus women's experience of living in a family varies according to family structure. Married women with children are more likely to experience stress than childless women, as they balance the demands of home and work. Women workers may come to the workplace from different types of families involving different roles and role expectations. These varied family demands the difficult role demands, but work experiences and relationships may assist women in dealing with family demands. Thus, a consideration of the reciprocal influences of work and family life should consider these influences in light of the type of family structure. Workplace relationships may be especially important to women and their families as they struggle to balance roles of worker, spouse, and mother. Through a cooperatively based work setting, and close relationships at work, women may receive support, assistance, and new ideas for balancing multiple roles. .

## Conclusions

The result revealed that they have to look after children and do the housework and they do not have time for themselves. Compared to the working women their social environment is limited. Their husbands are the only ones to appreciate their intense efforts they make for their homes. Women in our society have more household responsibilities, face domestic conflicts, abusive relationships, and enjoy fewer privileges, less rights, less social and economic freedom. Their housework is typically associated with unpaid, obligatory work. The engagement of non-working women in less number of roles may also be a contributory factor towards high anxiety in them, as they have to rely mainly on their role as housewives for their identity and self-esteem. The study concluded that non-working women suffer more from anxiety as compared to working women. The main contributory factors could be their low education, their involvement in less number of roles, and their familial and social status in general. Non-work demands can create stress both inside and outside of work. Stress is inherently cumulative, and it can be difficult to separate our personal and professional stress inducers.

*A woman is a change-agent. She can feed her family. Build her business. Raise her kids. Employ her neighbors. She can inspire sustainable*



*transformation and create a new story for herself, her children and her entire community. A woman is powerful and full of often-untapped potential. A woman can change the world. But first, she needs to be given an opportunity. Results embodied in my paper may contribute to Women Empowerment Project of government of India.*

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